

OEDIPUS:

A

TRAGEDY.

Written by Mr. DRYDEN, and Mr. LEE.

*Hi proprium decus & partum indignantur honorem,
Ni teneant* ————— Vir.

Vos exemplaria Græca

Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna. Horat.



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Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

OE^dipus.
Ad^raſtus.
Creon.
Tireſias.
Hæmon.
Alcander.
Diocles.
Pyracmon.
Phorbas.
Dymas.
AEgeon.
Ghost of Lajus.



W O M E N.

Jocasta.
Eurydice.
Manto.

Priests, Citizens, Attendants, &c.

S C E N E, *T H E B E S.*

O E D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Curtain rises to a plaintive Tune, representing the present Condition of Thebes ; dead Bodies appear at a Distance in the Streets ; some faintly go over the Stage, others drop.

Enter Alcander, Diocles and Pyracmon.

ALCANDER.

MEthinks we stand on ruins ; nature shakes
About us ; and the universal frame
So loose, that it but wants another push
To leap from off its hinges.

Di. No sun to chear us ; but a bloody globe
That rowls above ; a bald and beamless fire ;
His face o'er-grown with scurf : the sun's sick too ;
Shortly he'll be an earth.

Pyr. Therefore the seasons
Lye all confus'd ; and, by the heav'ns neglected.
Forget themselves : blind winter meets the summer
In his mid-way, and, seeing not his livery,
Has driv'n him head-long back : and the raw damps
With saggy wings fly heavily about,
Scattering their pestilential colds and rheums
Through all the lazy air.

Alc. Hence murrains follow
On bleating flocks, and on the lowing herds :
At last, the malady
Grew more domellick, and the faithful dog
Dy'd at his master's feet.

Dioc. And now his master :

And last they seiz'd on man.

Pyr. And then a thousand deaths at once advanc'd,
And every dart took place ; all was so sudden,
That scarce a first man fell ; one but began
To wonder, and straight fell a wonder too ;
A third, who stoop'd to raise his dying friend,
Dropt in the pious act. Heard you that groan ?

[*Groan without.*

Dioc. A troop of ghosts took flight together there :
Now death's grown riotous, and will play no more
For single stakes, but families and tribes :
How are we sure we breath not now our last ?
And that next minute,
Our bodies, cast into some common pit,
Shall not be built upon, and overlaid
By half a people ?

Alc. There's a chain of causes
Link'd to effects ; invincible necessity
That whate'er is, could not but so have been ;
That's my security.

To them enter Creon.

Cre. So had it need, when all our streets lie cover'd
With dead and dying men ;
And earth exposes bodies on the pavements
More than she hides in graves !
Betwixt the bride and bridegroom have I seen
The nuptial torch do common offices
Of marriage and of death.

Dioc. Now, *OEdipus*,
(If he return from war, our other plague)
Will scarce find half he left, to grace his triumphs.

Pyr. A feeble *Pæan* will be sung before him.

Alc. He would do well to bring the wives and chil-
Of conquer'd *Argians*, to renew his *Thebes*. (dren

Cre. May funerals meet him at the city gates
With their detested omen.

Dioc. Of his children.

Cre. Nay, though she be my sister, of his wife.

Alc. O that our *Thebes* might once again behold
A monarch *Theban* born !

Dioc. We might have had one.

Pyr. Yes, had the people pleas'd.

Cre.

Cre. Come, ye're my friends :
The queen, my sister, after *Lajus'* death,
Fear'd to lye single ; and supply'd his place
With a young successor.

Dioc. He much resembles
Her former husband too.

Alc. I always thought so. (black locks,

Pyr. When twenty winters more have grizzled his
He will be very *Lajus*.

Cre. So he will.

Mean time she stands provided of a *Lajus*,
More young and vigorous too, by twenty springs.
These women are such cunning purveyors!
Mark where their appetites have once been pleas'd,
The same resemblance in a younger lover
Lyes brooding in their fancies the same pleasures,
And urges their remembrance to desire.

Dioc. Had merit, not her dotage, been consider'd,
Then *Creon* had been king ; but *OEdipus*,
A stranger !

Cre. That word stranger, I confess,
Sounds harshly in my ears.

Dioc. We are your creatures ;
The people prone, as in all general ills,
To sudden change ; the king in wars abroad,
The queen, a woman weak and unregarded ;
Eurydice, the daughter of dead *Lajus*,
A princess young and beauteous, and unmarried.
Methinks from these disjointed propositions
Something might be produc'd.

Cre. The gods have done
Their part, by sending this commodious plague :
But oh the princess ! her hard heart is shut
By adamantine locks, against my love.

Alc. Your claim to her is strong : you are betroth'd.

Pyr. True ; in her nonage.

Alc. But that lett's remov'd.

Dioc. I heard the prince of *Argos*, young *Adrastus*,
When he was hostage here——

Cre. Oh name him not ! the bane of all my hopes ;
That hot-brain'd, head-long warrior, has the charms
Of youth, and somewhat of a lucky rashness,

To please a woman yet more fool than he.
That thoughtless sex is caught by outward form
And empty noise, and loves it self in man.

Alc. But since the war broke out about our frontiers,
He's now a foe to *Thebes*.

Cre. But is not so to her; see! she appears;
Once more I'll prove my fortune: you insinuate
Kind thoughts of me into the multitude;
Lay load upon the court; gull 'em with freedom;
And you shall see 'em toss their tails, and gad,
As if the breeze had stung 'em.

Dioc. We'll about it. [*Exeunt Alc. Dioc. and Pyr.*]

Enter Eurydice.

Cre. Hail, royal maid; thou bright *Eurydice*!
A lavish planet reign'd when thou wert born;
And made thee of such kindred-mould to heav'n,
Thou seem'st more heav'n's than ours.

Eur. Cast round your eyes;
Where late the streets were so thick sown with men,
Like *Cadmus'* brood they jostled for the passage:
Now look for those erected heads, and see 'em
Like pebbles paving all our publick ways:
When you have thought on this, then answer me,
If these be hours of courtship?

Cre. Yes, they are;
For when the gods destroy so fast, 'tis time
We should renew the race.

Eur. What, in the midst of horror!

Cre. Why not then?
There's the more need of comfort.

Eur. Impious *Creon*!

Cre. Unjust *Eurydice*! can you accuse me
Of love, which is heav'n's precept, and not fear
That vengeance, which you say pursue our crimes,
Should reach your perjuries?

Eur. Still th' old argument.

I bad you cast your eyes on other men,
Now cast them on your self: think what you are.

Cre. A man,

Eur. A man!

Cre. Why doubt you? I'm a man.

Eur. 'Tis well you tell me so, I should mistake you
For

For any other part o'th' whole creation,
Rather than think you man: hence from my sight,
Thou poison to my eyes.

Cre. 'Twas you first poison'd mine; and yet, methinks,
My face and person should not make you sport.

Eur. You force me, by your importunities,
To shew you what you are.

Cre. A prince, who loves you:
And, since your pride provokes me, worth your love,
Ev'n at its highest value.

Eur. Love for thee!
Why love renounc'd thee e'er thou saw'st the light;
Nature her self start back when thou wert born,
And cry'd, the work's not mine——
The midwife stood aghast; and when she saw
Thy mountain-back, and thy distorted legs,
Thy face it self,
Half-minted with the royal stamp of man,
And half o'ercome with beast, stood doubting long,
Whose right in thee were more:
And knew not, if to burn thee in the flames,
Were not the holier work.

Cre. Am I to blame, if nature threw my body
In so perverse a mould? yet when she cast
Her envious hand upon my supple joints
Unable to resist, and rumbled 'em
On heaps in their dark lodging, to revenge
Her bungled work, she stamp't my mind more fair:
And as from *Chaos*, huddled and deform'd,
The gods struck fire, and lighted up their lamps
That beautifie the sky, so she inform'd
This ill-shap'd body with a daring soul:
And making less than man, she made me more.

Eur. No; thou art all one error, soul and body;
The first young tryal of some unskill'd pow'r,
Rude in the making art, and ape of *Jove*.
Thy crooked mind within hunch'd out thy back,
And wander'd in thy limbs: to thy own kind
Make love, if thou canst find it in the world;
And seek not from our sex to raise an off-spring,
Which, mingled with the rest, would tempt the gods
To cut off human kind.

Cre. No ; let 'em leave
The *Argian* prince for you : that enemy
Of *Thebes* has made you false, and break the vows
You made to me.

Eur. They were my mother's vows,
Made when I was at nurse.

Cre. But hear me, maid ;
This blot of nature, this deform'd, loath'd *Creon*,
Is master of a sword, to reach the blood
Of your young *Minion*, spoil the gods fine work,
And stab you in his heart.

Eur. This when thou dost,
Then may'st thou still be curs'd with loving me :
And, as thou art, be still unpitied, loath'd.
And let his ghost——no, let his ghost have rest ;
But let the greatest, fiercest, foulest fury,
Let *Creon* haunt himself. [Exit *Eur.*

Cre. 'Tis true, I am
What she has told me, an offence to fight :
My body opens inward to my soul,
And lets in day to make my vices seen
By all discerning eyes, but the blind vulgar.
I must make haste, e're *Oedipus* return,
To snatch the crown and her ; for I still love ;
But love with malice ; as an angry cur
Snarls while he feeds, so will I seize and staunch
The hunger of my love on this proud beauty,
And leave the scraps for slaves.

Enter Tiresias leaning on a staff, and led by his daughter Manto.

What makes this blind prophetick fool abroad ?
Wou'd his *Apollo* had him, he's too holy
For earth and me ; I'll shun his walk ; and seek
My popular friends. [Exit *Creon.*

Tir. A little farther ; yet a little farther,
Thou wretched daughter of a dark old man,
Conduct my weary steps ; and thou, who see'st
For me and for thy self, beware thou tread not
With impious steps upon dead corpse ;——now stay,
Methinks I draw more open, vital air.
Where are we ?

Man. Under covert of a wall :

The

The most frequented once, and noisy part
Of *Thebes*, now midnight silence reigns ev'n here ;
And grass untrodden springs beneath our feet.

Tir. If there be nigh this place a sunny bank,
There let me rest a while : a sunny bank !
Alas ! how can it be where no sun shines !
But a dim winking taper in the skies,
That nods, and scarce holds up its drowzy head
To glimmer through the damps.

[*A Noise within, Follow, follow, follow, a Creon, a Creon, a Creon.*]

Hark ! a tumultuous noise, and *Creon's* name
Thrice eccho'd.

Man. Fly, the tempest drives this way.

Tir. Whither can age and blindness take their flight ?
If I could fly, what cou'd I suffer worse,
Secure of greater Ills !

[*Noise again, Creon, Creon, Creon.*
*Enter Creon, Diocles, Alcander, Pyracmon ; followed
by the crowd.*

Cre. I thank ye, country-men, but must refuse
The honours you intend me ; they're too great ;
And I am too unworthy, think again,
And make a better choice.

1 *Cit.* Think twice ! I ne'er thought twice in all my
life ; that's double work.

2 *Cit.* My first word is always my second ; and
therefore I'll have no second word : and therefore
once again I say, a *Creon*.

All. A *Creon*, a *Creon*, a *Creon* !

Cre. Yet hear me, fellow-citizens.

Dioc. Fellow-citizens ! there was a word of kindness.

Alc. When did *Oedipus* salute you by that familiar

1 *Cit.* Never, never ; he was too proud. (name ?

Cre. Indeed he could not, for he was a stranger :
But under him our *Thebes* is half destroy'd.
Forbid it heav'n the residue should perish
Under a *Theban* born.

'Tis true, the gods might send this plague among you,
Because a stranger rul'd : but what of that ?
Can I redress it now ?

3 *Cit.* Yes, you or none.

'Tis certain that the gods are angry with us,
Because he reigns.

Cre. *Oedipus* may return, you may be ruin'd.

1 *Cit.* Nay, if that be the matter, we are ruin'd already.

2 *Cit.* Half of us, that are here present, were living men but yesterday, and we that are absent do but drop and drop, and no man knows whether he be dead or living; and therefore, while we are sound and well, let us satisfy our consciences, and make a new king.

3 *Cit.* Ha, if we were but worthy to see another coronation! and then, if we must die, we'll go merrily together.

All. To the question, to the question.

Dioc. Are you content, *Creon* should be your king?

All. A *Creon*, a *Creon*, a *Creon*!

Tir. Hear me, ye *Thebans*, and thou *Creon*, hear me.

1 *Cit.* Who's that would be heard? we'll hear no man:
We can scarce hear one another.

Tir. I charge you by the gods to hear me.

2 *Cit.* Oh, 'tis *Apollo's* priest, we must hear him; 'tis the old blind prophet, that sees all things.

3 *Cit.* He comes from the gods too, and they are our betters, and therefore in good manners we must hear him; speak, prophet.

2 *Cit.* For coming from the gods, that's no great matter, they can all say that; but he's a great scholar, he can make almanacks, an he were put to't, and therefore I say hear him.

Tir. When angry heav'n scatters its plagues among
Is it for nought, ye *Thebans*? are the gods (you,
Unjust in punishing? are there no crimes
Which pull this vengeance down?

1 *Cit.* Yes, yes, no doubt, there are some sins stirring,
that are the cause of all.

3 *Cit.* Yes, there are sins; or we should have no taxes.

2 *Cit.* For my part, I can speak it with a safe conscience, I ne'er sinn'd in all my life.

1. *Cit.* Nor I.

3. *Cit.* Nor I.

(our doors.

2. *Cit.* Then we are all justified, the sin lies not at

Tir. All justified alike, and yet all guilty;
Were every man's false-dealing brought to light,

His

His envy, malice, lying, perjuries,
His weights and measures, th'other man's extortions,
With what face could you tell offended Heav'n,
You had not sinn'd?

2. *Cit.* Nay, if these be sins, the case is alter'd;
for my part I never thought any thing but murder had
been a sin.

Tir. And yet, as if all these were less than nothing,
You add rebellion to 'em; impious *Thebans*!
Have you not sworn before the gods to serve
And to obey this *Oedipus*, your king
By publick voice elected? answer me,
If this be true!

2. *Cit.* This is true; but it's a hard world, neigh-
bours, if a man's oath must be his master.

Cre. Speak, *Diocles*; all goes wrong.

Dioc. How are you traytors, Countrymen of *Thebes*?
This holy sir, who presses you with oaths,
Forgets your first; were you not sworn before
To *Lajus*, and his blood?

All. We were; we were.

Dioc. While *Lajus* has a lawful successor,
Your first oath still must bind: *Eurydice*
Is heir to *Lajus*; let her marry *Creon*:
Offended heav'n will never be appeas'd,
While *Oedipus* pollutes the throne of *Lajus*,
A stranger to his blood.

All. We'll no *Oedipus*, no *Oedipus*.

1. *Cit.* He puts the prophet in a mouse-hole.

2. *Cit.* I knew it would be so; the last man ever
speaks the best reason.

Tir. Can benefits thus dye, ungrateful *Thebans*!
Remember yet, when, after *Lajus*' death,
The monster *Sphinx* laid your rich country waste,
Your vineyards spoil'd, your labouring oxen slew;
Your selves, for fear, mew'd up within your walls,
She, taller than your gates, overlook'd your town;
But when she rais'd her bulk to sail above you,
She drove the air around her, like a whirlwind,
And shaded all beneath; till stooping down,
She clap'd her leathern wings against your tow'rs,
And thrust out her long neck, ev'n to your doors.

Dioc.

Dioc. Alc. Pyr. We'll hear no more.

Tir. You durst not meet in temples
 T'invoke the gods for aid; the proudest he,
 Who leads you now, then cower'd, like a dar'd lark:
 This *Creon* shook for fear;
 The blood of *Lajus* curdled in his veins,
 'Till *Oedipus* arriv'd;
 Call'd by his own high courage and the gods,
 Himself to you a God: ye offer'd him
 Your Queen, and crown; (but what was then your
 And heav'n authoriz'd it by his success: (crown!)
 Speak then, who is your lawful king?

All. 'Tis *Oedipus*.

Tir. 'Tis *Oedipus* indeed: your king more lawful
 Than yet you dream: for something still there lyes
 In heav'n's dark volume, which I read through mists:
 'Tis great, prodigious; 'tis a dreadful birth
 Of wondrous fate; and now, just now disclosing.
 I see, I see! how terrible it dawns!
 And my soul sickens with it.

1. *Cit.* How the God shakes him! (umph!

Tir. He comes! he comes! victory! conquest! tri-
 But oh! guiltless and guilty: murder! parricide!
 Incest! discovery! punishment——'tis ended,
 And all your sufferings o'er.

A Trumpet within; Enter Hamon.

Ham. Rouze up, ye *Thebans*; tune your *Io* *Paeans*!
 Your king returns; the *Argians* are o'er-come;
 Their warlike Prince in single combat taken,
 And led in bonds by god-like *Oedipus*.

All. *Oedipus, Oedipus, Oedipus!*

Creon. Furies confound his fortune!—— [*Aside.*
 Haste, all haste, [To them.

And meet with blessings our victorious king;
 Decree processions; bid new holy-days;
 Crown all the statues of our gods with garlands;
 And raise a brazen column, thus inscrib'd, (*Thebes.*
 To *Oedipus*, now twice a conqueror; deliverer of his
 Trust me, I weep for joy to see this day. (countrymen,

Tir. Yes, heav'n knows how thou weep'st:—Go,
 And, as you us'd to supplicate your gods,
 So meet your king, with bays, and olive-branches:

Bow

Bow down, and touch his knees, and beg from him
An end of all your woes; for only he
Can give it you. [*Ex. Tiresias, the people following.*
Enter Oed. in triumph; Adrastus prisoner; Dymas, train.

Cre. All hail, great *Oedipus*!
Thou mighty conqueror, hail! welcome to *Thebes*:
To thy own *Thebes*; to all that's left of *Thebes*:
For half thy citizens are swept away,
And wanting to thy triumphs:
And we, the happy remnant, only live
To welcome thee, and dye.

Oedip. Thus pleasure never comes sincere to man;
But lent by heav'n upon hard usury:
And while *Jove* holds us out the bowl of joy,
E're it can reach our lips, it's dash'd with gall
By some left-handed God. O mournful triumph!
O conquest, gain'd abroad, and lost at home!
O *Argos*! now rejoice, for *Thebes* lyes low;
Thy slaughter'd sons now smile, and think they won;
When they can count more *Theban* ghosts than theirs.

Adr. No; *Argos* mourns with *Thebes*; you temper'd so
Your courage while you fought, that mercy seem'd
The manlier virtue, and much more prevail'd.
While *Argos* is a people, think your *Thebes*
Can never want for subjects; every nation
Will crowd to serve, where *Oedipus* commands. (tor!)

Cre. to Hæm. How mean it shews to fawn upon the vic-
Hæm. Had you beheld him fight, you had said other-
Come, 'tis brave bearing in him, not to envy (wise.
Superior virtue.

O. dip. This indeed is conquest,
To gain a friend like you: why were we foes?

Adr. 'Cause we were kings, and each disdain'd an
I fought to have it in my pow'r to do (equal.
What thou hast done; and so to use my conquest;
To shew thee, honour was my only motive.
Know this, that were my army at thy gates,
And *Thebes* thus waste, I would not take the gift,
Which, like a toy dropp'd from the hands of fortune,
Lay for the next chance-corer.

Oedip. [*embracing*] No more captive,
But brother of the war: 'tis much more pleasant,

And

And safer, trust me, thus to meet thy love,
Than when hard gantlets clench'd our warlike hands,
And kept 'em from soft use.

Adr. My conqueror! (alive.

Oedip. My friend! that other name keeps enmity
But longer to detain thee were a crime;
To love, and to *Eurydice*, go free:
Such welcome as a ruin'd town can give,
Expect from me; the rest let her supply.

Adr. I go without a blush, though conquer'd twice;
By you, and by my princess. [*Ex. Adrastus.*

Cre. [*aside*] Then I am conquer'd thrice; by *Oedipus*,
And her, and ev'n by him, the slave of both:
Gods, I'm beholden to you, for making me your image,
Wou'd I cou'd make you mine. [*Ex. Creon.*

*Enter the people with branches in their hands, holding
them up, and kneeling: two priests before them.*

Oedip. Alas, my people!

What means this speechless sorrow, down-cast-eyes,
And lifted hands! if there be one among you
Whom grief has left a tongue, speak for the rest.

I Pr. O father of thy country!

To thee these knees are bent, these eyes are lifted,
As to a visible divinity:

A prince, on whom heav'n safely might repose
The business of mankind: for providence
Might on thy careful bosom sleep secure,
And leave her task to thee.

But where's the glory of thy former acts?
Ev'n that's destroy'd when none shall live to speak it.
Millions of subjects shalt thou have; but mute:
A people of the dead; a crowded desert;
A midnight silence at the noon of day.

Oedip. O! were our gods as ready with their pity,
As I with mine, this presence shou'd be throng'd
With all I left alive; and my sad eyes
Not search in vain for friends, whose promis'd fight
Flatter'd my toils of war.

I Pr. Twice our deliverer.

Oedip. Nor are now your vows
Address'd to one who sleeps:

When this unwelcome news first reach'd my ears,

Dymas

Dymas was sent to *Delphos* to enquire
The cause and cure of this contagious ill:
And is this day return'd: but since his message
Concerns the publick, I refus'd to hear it
But in this general presence: let him speak.

Dym. A dreadful answer from the hallow'd urn,
And sacred *Tripous* did the priestess give,
In these mysterious words.

The Oracle. *Shed in a cursed hour, by cursed hand,
Blood-royal unreveng'd, has curs'd the land.
When Lajus' death is expiated well,
Your plague shall cease: the rest let Lajus tell.*

Oedip. Dreadful indeed! blood, and a king's blood
And such a king's, and by his subjects shed! (too!
(Else why this curse on *Thebes*?) no wonder then
If monsters, wars, and plagues revenge such crimes.
If heav'n be just, its whole artillery
All must be empty'd on us: not one bolt
Shall err from *Thebes*; but more be call'd for, more:
New-moulded thunder of a larger size;
Driv'n by whole *Jove*. What, touch anointed pow'r!
Then gods beware; *Jove* would himself be next;
Cou'd you but reach him too.

2 *Pr.* We mourn the sad remembrance.

Oedip. Well you may:
Worse than a plague infects you: y'are devoted
To mother earth, and to th'infernal pow'rs:
Hell has a right in you: I thank you, gods,
That I'm no *Theban* born: how my blood curdles!
As if this curse touch'd me! and touch'd me nearer
Than all this presence!—yes, 'tis a king's blood,
And I, a king, am ty'd in deeper bonds
To expiate this blood: but where, from whom,
Or how must I atone it? tell me, *Thebans*,
How *Lajus* fell? for a confus'd report
Pass'd through my ears, when first I took the crown:
But, full of hurry, like a morning-dream,
It vanish'd in the business of the day.

1 *Pr.* He went in private forth; but thinly follow'd;
And ne'er return'd to *Thebes*.

Oedip. Nor any from him? came there no attendant?
None to bring news?

2 *Pr.*

2 *Pr.* But one; and he so wounded,
He scarce drew breath to speak some few faint words:
Oedip. What were they? something may be learnt
from thence.

1 *Pr.* He said, a band of robbers watch'd their passage;
Who took advantage of a narrow way,
To murder *Lajus* and the rest: himself
Left too for dead.

Oedip. Made you no more enquiry,
But took this bare relation?

2 *Pr.* 'Twas neglected:
For then the monster *Sphinx* began to rage;
And present cares soon buried the remote;
So was it hush'd, and never since reviv'd.

Oedip. Mark, *Thebans*, Mark!
Just then, the *Sphinx* began to rage among you;
The gods took hold ev'n of th' offending minute,
And dated thence your woes: thence will I trace 'em.

1 *Pr.* 'Tis just thou should'st.

Oedip. Hear then this dreadful imprecation; hear it:
'Tis laid on all; not any one exempt:
Bear witness heav'n, avenge it on the perjur'd.
If any *Theban* born, if any stranger,
Reveal this murder, or produce its author,
'Ten *Attick* talents be his just reward:
But, if for fear, for favour, or for hire,
The murd'rer he conceal, the curse of *Thebes*
Fall heavy on his head: unite our plagues,
Ye gods, and place 'em there: from fire and water,
Converse, and all things common, be he banish'd.
But for the murd'rer's self, unsound by man,
Find him, ye pow'rs celestial and infernal;
And the same fate, or worse than *Lajus* met,
Let be his lot: his children be accurs'd;
His wife and kindred, all of his be curs'd.

Both Pr. Confirm it, heav'n!

Enter Jocasta; attended by women.

Joc. At your devotions? heav'n succeed your wishes;
And bring th' effect of these your pious pray'rs
On you, and me, and all.

Pr. Avert this omen, heav'n!

Oedip. O fatal sound, unfortunate *Jocasta*!

What

What hast thou said? an ill hour hast thou chosen
For these fore-boding words: why, we were cursing.

Joc. Then may that curse fall only where you laid it.

Oedip. Speak no more:

For all thou say'st is ominous: we were cursing;
And that dire imprecation hast thou fasten'd
On *Thebes*, and thee, and me, and all of us.

Joc. Are then my blessings turn'd into a curse?
O unkind *Oedipus*! My former lord
Thought me his blessing: be thou like my *Lajus*.

Oedip. What, yet again! the third time hast thou
This imprecation was for *Lajus*' death, (curs'd me;
And thou hast wish'd me like him.

Joc. Horror seizes me!

Oedip. Why dost thou gaze upon me? prithee, love,
Take off thy Eye; it burdens me too much.

Joc. The more I look, the more I find of *Lajus*:
His speech, his garb, his action; nay, his frown;
(For I have seen it,) but ne'er bent on me.

Oedip. Are we so like?

Joc. In all things but his love.

Oedip. I love thee more.

So well I love, words cannot speak how well.
No pious son e'er lov'd his mother more
Than I my dear *Jocasta*.

Joc. I love you too

The self-same way: and when you chid, methought
A mother's love start up in your defence,
And bade me not be angry: be not you:
For I love *Lajus* still as wives shou'd love:
But you more tenderly; as part of me:
And when I have you in my arms, methinks
I lull my child asleep.

Oedip. Then we are blest:

And all these curses sweep along the skies,
Like empty clouds; but drop not on our heads.

Joc. I have not joy'd an hour since you departed,
For publick miseries, and for private fears;
But this blest meeting has o'er-paid 'em all.
Good fortune, that comes seldom, comes more wel-
All I can wish for now, is your consent (come.
To make my brother happy.

Oedip.

Oedip. How, *Jocasta*?

Joc. By marriage with his niece *Eurydice*.

Oedip. Uncle and niece! they are too near, my love;
'Tis too like incest: 'tis offence to kind:
Had I not promis'd, were there no *Adrastus*,
No choice but *Creon* left her of mankind,
They shou'd not marry; speak no more of it;
The thought disturbs me.

Joc. Heav'n can never blefs
A vow so broken, which I made to *Creon*;
Remember, he's my brother.

Oedip. That's the bar:
And she thy daughter: nature would abhor
To be forc'd back again upon her self,
And, like a whirlpool, swallow her own streams.

Joc. Be not displeas'd; I'll move the suit no more.

Oedip. No, do not; for, I know not why, it shakes
When I but think on incest; move we forward (me
To thank the gods for my success, and pray
To wash the guilt of royal blood away. [*Exeunt omnes.*

A C T II. S C E N E I.

S C E N E *An open gallery. A royal bed-chamber
being suppos'd behind.*

The Time, Night. Thunder, &c.

Enter Hæmon, Alcander and Pyracmon.

Hæm. SURE 'tis the end of all things! fate has torn
The lock of time off, and his head is now
The ghastly ball of round eternity!
Call you these peals of thunder, but the yawn
Of bellowing clouds? by *Jove*, they seem to me
The world's last groans; and those vast sheets of flame
Are its last blaze! the tapers of the gods,
The sun and moon, run down like waxen-globes;
The shooting stars end all in purple jellie,
And *Chaos* is at hand.

Pyr. 'Tis midnight, yet there's not a *Theban* sleeps,
But such as ne'er must wake. All crowd about
The palace, and implore, as from a God,

Help

Help of the king ; who, from the battlement,
By the red lightning's glare, descry'd afar,
Atones the angry pow'rs. [Thunder, &c.]

Hæm. Ha ! *Pyræmon*, look ;
Behold, *Alcander*, from yon' west of heav'n,
The perfect figures of a man and woman :
A sceptre bright with gems in each right hand,
Their flowing robes of dazling purple made ;
Distinctly yonder in that point they stand,
Just west ; a bloody red stains all the place :
And see, their faces are quite hid in clouds.

Pyr. Clusters of golden stars hang o'er their heads,
And seem so crowded, that they burst upon 'em :
All dart at once their baleful influence
In leaking fire.

Alc. Long-bearded comets stick,
Like flaming porcupines, to their left sides,
As they would shoot their quills into their hearts.

Hæm. But see ! the king, and queen, and all the court
Did ever day or night shew ought like this ?

[Thunders again. The scene draws and discovers the prodigies.]

Enter Oedipus, Jocasta, Eurydice, Adrastus, all coming forward with amazement.

Oedip. Answer, you pow'rs divine ; spare all this noise,
This rack of heav'n, and speak your fatal pleasure.
Why breaks yon dark and dusky orb away ?
Why from the bleeding womb of monstrous night,
Burst forth such myriads of abortive stars ?
Ha ! my *Jocasta*, look ! the silver moon !
A settling crimson stains her beauteous face !
She's all o'er blood ! and look ! behold again,
What mean the mystick heav'ns ? she journeys on !
A vast eclipse darkens the labouring planet :
Sound there, sound all our instruments of war ;
Clarions and trumpets, silver, brass and iron,
And beat a thousand drums to help her labour.

Adr. 'Tis vain ; you see the prodigies continue ;
Let's gaze no more ; the gods are humourous.

Oedip. Forbear, rash man——once more I ask your pleasure.

If that the glow-worm light of human reason
Might

Might dare to offer at immortal knowledge,
 And cope with gods, why all this storm of nature?
 Why do the rocks split, and why rolls the sea?
 Why those portents in heav'n, and plagues on earth?
 Why yon' gigantick forms, ethereal monsters?
 Alas! is all this but to fright the dwarfs
 Which your own hands have made? then be it so.
 Or if the fates resolve some expiation
 For murder'd *Lajus*; hear me, hear me, gods!
 Hear me thus prostrate: spare this groaning land,
 Save innocent *Thebes*, stop the tyrant death;
 Do this, and lo I stand up an oblation
 To meet your swiftest and severest anger,
 Shoot all at once, and strike me to the centre.

The cloud draws that veil'd the heads of the figures in the sky, and shews 'em crown'd, with the names of Oedipus and Jocasta written above in great characters of gold.

Adr. Either I dream, and all my cooler senses
 Are vanish'd with that cloud that fleets away;
 Or just above those two majestick heads,
 I see, I read distinctly in large gold,
Oedipus and Jocasta.

Alc. I read the same.

Adr. 'Tis wonderful, yet ought not man to wade
 Too far in the vast deep of destiny.

[Thunder; and the prodigies vanish.]

Joc. My lord, my *Oedipus*, why gaze you now,
 When the whole heav'n is clear, as if the gods
 Had some new monsters made? will you not turn,
 And bless your people, who devour each word
 You breath?

Oedip. It shall be so.

Yes I will die, O *Thebes*, to save thee!
 Draw from my heart my blood, with more content
 Than e'er I wore thy crown. Yet, O *Jocasta*!
 By all th' indearments of miraculous love,
 By all our languishings, our fears in pleasure,
 Which oft have made us wonder; here I swear
 On thy fair hand, upon thy breast I swear,
 I cannot call to mind, from budding childhood

To

To blooming youth, a crime by me committed,
For which the awful gods should doom my death.

Joc. 'Tis not you, my lord,
But he who murder'd *Lajus*, frees the land :
Were you, which is impossible, the man,
Perhaps my poniard first should drink your blood ;
But you are innocent, as your *Jocasta*,
From crimes like those. This made me violent
To save your life, which you unjust would lose :
Nor can you comprehend, with deepest thought,
The horrid agony you cast me in,
When you resolv'd to die.

Oedip. Is't possible ?

Joc. Alas ! why start you so ? her stif'ning grief,
Who saw her children slaughter'd all at once,
Was dull to mine : methinks I should have made
My bosom bare against the armed god,
To save my *Oedipus*.

Oedip. I pray, no more.

Joc. You've silenc'd me, my lord.

Oedip. Pardon me, dear *Jocasta* ;
Pardon a heart that sinks with sufferings,
And can but vent it self in sobs and murmurs :
Yet to restore my peace, I'll find him out.
Yes, yes, you gods ! you shall have ample vengeance
On *Lajus'* murd'rer. O, the traitor's name !
I'll know't, I will ; art shall be conjur'd for it,
And nature all unravell'd.

Joc. Sacred fir——

[fetch him,

Oedip. Rage will have way, and 'tis but just ; I'll
Tho' lodg'd in air, upon a dragon's wing,
Tho' rocks should hide him : nay, he shall be dragg'd
From hell, if charms can hurry him along ;
His ghost shall be, by sage *Tiresias'* pow'r,
(*Tiresias*, that rules all beneath the moon)
Confin'd to flesh, to suffer death once more
And then be plung'd in his first fires again.

Enter Creon.

Cre. My lord, *Tiresias* attends your pleasure.

Oedip. Haste, and bring him in.

O, my *Jocasta*, *Eurydice*, *Adrastus*,
Creon, and all ye *Thebans*, now the end

Of plagues, of madness, murders, prodigies,
 Draws on: this battle of the heav'ns and earth
 Shall by his wisdom be reduc'd to peace.

*Enter Tiresias, leaning on a staff, led by his daughter
 Manto, follow'd by other Thebans.*

O thou, whose most aspiring mind
 Knows all the business of the courts above,
 Opens the closets of the gods, and dares
 To mix with ~~Jove~~ himself and fate at council;
 O prophet, answer me, declare aloud
 The traitor who conspir'd the death of *Lajus*:
 Or be they more, who from malignant stars
 Have drawn this plague that blasts unhappy *Thebes*?

Tir. We must no more than fate commissions us
 To tell; yet something, and of moment, I'll unfold,
 If that the god would wake; I feel him now,
 Like a strong spirit charm'd into a tree,
 That leaps, and moves the wood without a wind:
 The rous'd god, as if all this while he lay
 Intomb'd alive, starts and dilates himself;
 He struggles, and he tears my aged trunk
 With holy fury, my old arteries burst,
 My rivell'd skin,
 Like parchment, crackles at the hallow'd fire;
 I shall be young again: *Manto*, my daughter,
 Thou hast a voice that might have sav'd the bard
 Of *Thrace*, and forc'd the raging *Bacchanals*,
 With lifted prongs, to listen to thy airs:
 O charm this god, this fury in my bosom,
 Lull him with tuneful notes, and artful strings,
 With pow'rful strains; *Manto*, my lovely child,
 Sooth the unruly god-head to be mild.

SONG to A P O L L O.

Phœbus, god below'd by men;
 At thy dawn, every beast is rous'd in his den;
 At thy setting, all the birds of thy absence complain,
 And we die, all die till the morning comes again.

Phœbus, god below'd by men!

Idol of the eastern kings,

Awful as the gods who sing

Thy name, O Phoebus, and thy golden quiver;

*Who to this mortal life brings,
All harmonious heavenly things!*

The dazzy prospect to revive

Ten thousand thousand forms before him drive:

With chariots and horses all of fire wake him,

Commissions, and furies, and prophecies shake him:

Let him tell it in riddles, but he bend with the load,

Tho' he burst with the weight of the terrible god.

Tit. The wretch, who shed the blood of old *Lab-*
Lives, and is great; [*dacides*,

But cruel greatness ne'er was long unpunish'd:

The first of *Lajus*' blood his life did seize,

And urg'd his fate,

Which else had lasting been and strong.

The wretch who *Lajus* kill'd must bleed or fly;

Or *Phæbus*, consum'd with plagues, in ruins lye.

Oedip. The first of *Lajus*' blood! pronounce the person;

May the god roar from thy prophetick mouth,

That e'en the dead may start up, to behold:

Name him, I say, that most accursed wretch,

For by the stars he dies:

Speak, I command thee;

By *Phæbus*, speak; for sudden death's his doom:

Here shall he fall, bleed on this very spot:

His name, I charge thee once more, speak.

Tit. 'Tis lost,

Like what we think can never shun remembrance;

Yet of a sudden's gone beyond the clouds.

Oedip. Fetch it from thence; I'll have't, where-e'er it be.

Cra. Let me intreat you, sacred sir, be calm,

And *Creon* shall point out the great offender.

'Tis true, respect of nature might enjoin

My silence, at another time; but oh!

Much more the pow'r of my eternal love! [try—

That, that should strike me dumb: yet *Thibis*, my coun-

I'll break through all, to succour thee, poor city!

O! I must speak.

Oedip. Speak then, if ought thou know'st,

As much thou seem'st to know; delay no longer.

Cra. O beauty! O illustrious royal maid!

To whom my vows were ever paid till now.

The coldest nymph might read them without blushing,
 Art thou the murd'ers then of wretched *Lajus*?
 And I, must I accuse thee? O my tears!
 Why will you fall in so abhorr'd a cause?
 But that thy beauteous, barbarous hand destroy'd
 Thy father, (O the monstrous act!) both gods
 And men at once take notice.

Oedip. *Eurydice!*

Eur. Traitor, go on; I scorn thy little malice;
 And knowing more my perfect innocence,
 Than gods and men, then how much more than thee,
 Who art their opposite, and form'd a liar,
 I thus disdain thee! thou once didst talk of love;
 Because I hate thy love, thou dost accuse me.

Adr. Villain, inglorious villain,
 And traitor, double-damn'd, who durst blaspheme
 The spotless virtue of the brightest beauty;
 Thou dy'st: nor shall the sacred majesty,

[*Draws and wounds him.*]

That guards this place, preserve thee from my rage.

Oedip. Disarm 'em both: prince, I shall make you
 know

That I can tame you twice. Guards, seize him.

Adr. Sir,

I must acknowledge in another cause
 Repentance might abash me; but I glory
 In this, and smile to see the traitor's blood.

Oedip. *Creon*, you shall be satisfi'd at full.

Cre. My hurt is nothing, Sir; but I appeal
 To wise *Tiresias*, if my accusation
 Be not most true. The first of *Lajus'* blood
 Gave him his death. Is there a prince before her?
 Then she is faultless, and I ask her pardon.
 And may this blood ne'er cease to drop, O *Thebes*,
 If pity of thy sufferings did not move me
 To shew the cure which heav'n it self prescrib'd.

Eur. Yes *Thebans*, I will die to save your lives,
 More willingly than you can wish my fate;
 But let this good, this wise, this holy man,
 Pronounce my sentence: for to fall by him,
 By the vile breath of that prodigious villain,

Would

Would sink my soul, tho' I should die a martyr.

Adr. Unhand me, slaves. O mightiest of kings,
See at your feet a prince not us'd to kneel;
Touch not *Eurydice*, by all the gods,
As you would save your *Thebes*, but take my life:
For, should she perish, heav'n would heap plagues on
Rain sulphur down, hurl kindled thunder-bolts (plagues,
Upon your guilty heads.

Cre. You turn to gallantry, what is but justice:
Proof will be easie made. *Adrastus* was
The robber who bereft th' unhappy king
Of life; because he flatly had deny'd
To make so poor a prince his son-in-law:
Therefore 'twere fit that both should perish.

1 Theb. Both, let both die.

All Theb. Both, both; let 'em die. [here,

Oedip. Hence, you wild herd! for your ring-leader
He shall be made example. *Hæmon*, take him.

1 Theb. Mercy, O mercy.

Oedip. Mutiny in my presence!

Hence, let me see that busie face no more. (rage?

Tir. Thebans. what madness makes you drunk with
Enough of guilty death's already acted:

Fierce *Creon* has accus'd *Eurydice*,
With prince *Adrastus*; which the God reproves
By inward checks, and leaves their fate in doubt.

Oedip. Therefore instruct us what remains to do,
Or suffer; for I feel a sleep like death
Upon me, and I sigh to be at rest.

Tir. Since that the pow'rs divine refuse to clear
The mystick deed, I'll to the grove of furies;
There I can force th' infernal gods to shew
Their horrid forms; each trembling ghost shall rise,
And leave their grizly king without a waiter.

For prince *Adrastus* and *Eurydice*

My life's engag'd, I'll guard 'em in the Fane,
'Till the dark mysteries of hell are done.

Follow me, princess; *Thebans*, all to rest.

O, *Oedipus*, to morrow——but no more:

If that thy wakeful genius will permit,
Indulge thy brain this night with softer slumbers:
To morrow, O, to morrow——sleep my son;

And in prophetic dreams thy fate be shown.

[*Ex. Tir. Adr. Eur. Man. and Theb. Manent* Oedipus, Jocasta, Creon, Pyracmon, Hæmon, and Alcander.

Oedip. To bed, my fair, my dear, my best *Jocasta*:
After the toils of war, 'tis wondrous strange
Our loves should thus be dash'd. One moment's
And I'll approach the arms of my belov'd. (thought,

Joc. Consume whole years in care, so now and then
I may have leave to feed my famish'd eyes
With one short passing glance, and sigh my vows :
This, and no more, my lord, is all the passion
Of languishing *Jocasta*. [Exit.

Oedip. Thou softest, sweetest of the world ! good
night.

Nay, she is beauteous too ; yet, mighty love !
I never offer'd to obey thy laws,
But an unusual chilness came upon me ;
An unknown hand still check'd my forward joy,
Dash'd me with blushes, tho' no light was near :
That ev'n the act became a violation.

Pyr. He's strangely thoughtful. (call me ?

Oedip. Hark ! who was that ? ha ! *Creon*, didst thou

Cre. Not I, my gracious lord, nor any here.

Oedip. That's strange ! methought I heard a doleful
Cry'd *Oedipus*—the prophet bad me sleep ; (voice
He talk'd of dreams, and visions, and to-morrow !
I'll muse no more on't, come what will or can,
My thoughts are clearer than unclouded stars ;
And with those thoughts I'll rest : *Creon*, good night.

[Exit with Hæm.

Cre. Sleep seal your eyelids, fir, eternal sleep.
But if he must sleep and wake again, O all
Tormenting dreams, wild horrors of the night,
And hags of fancy wing him through the air :
From precipices hurl him headlong down ;
Charybdis roar, and death be set before him.

Alc. Your curses have already tak'n effect ;
For he looks very sad.

Cre. May he be rooted, where he stands, for ever ;
His eye-balls never move, brows be unbent,
His blood, his entrails, liver, heart and bowels,

Be blacker than the place I wish him, hell.

Pyr. No more : you tear your self, but vex not him.
Methinks 'twere brave this night to force the temple,
While blind *Tiresias* conjures up the fiends,
And pass the time with nice *Eurydice*.

Alc. Try promises, and threats, and if all fail,
Since hell's broke loose, why should not you be mad ?
Ravish, and leave her dead with her *Adraustus*.

Cre. Were the globe mine, I'd give a province hourly
For such another thought. Lust and revenge !
To stab at once the only man I hate,
And to enjoy the woman whom I love !
I ask no more of my auspicious stars ;
The rest as fortune please ; so but this night
She play me fair, why, let her turn for ever.

Enter Hæmon.

Hæm. My lord, the troubled king is gone to rest ;
Yet, e'er he slept, commanded me to clear
The anti-chambers : none must dare be near him.

Cre. Hæmon, you do your duty ;—— [*Thunder.*]
And we obey.—the night grows yet more dreadful !
'Tis just that all retire to their devotions ;
The gods are angry, but to-morrow's dawn,
If prophets do not lie, will make all clear. [*As they go off.*
Oedipus enters, walking asleep in his skirt, with a dagger
in his right hand, and a taper in his left.

Oedip. O, my *Jocasta* ! 'tis for this the wet
Starv'd soldier lies all night on the cold ground ;
For this he bears the storms
Of winter camps, and freezes in his arms :
To be thus circled, to be thus embrac'd ;
That I could hold thee ever ! —— ha ! where art thou ?
What means this melancholy light, that seems
The gloom of glowing embers ?
The curtain's drawn ; and see, she's here again !
Jocasta ? ha ! what, fall'n asleep so soon ?
How fares my love ? this taper will inform me.
Ha ! lightning blast me, thunder
Rivet me ever to *Prometheus*' rock,
And vultures gnaw out my incestuous heart.
By all the gods ! my mother *Merope* !
My sword, a dagger ; ha, who waits there ? slaves,

My sword: what, *Hæmon*, dar'st thou, villain, stop me?
 With thy own ponyard perish. Ha! who's this?
 Or is't a change of death? by all my horrors,
 New murder; thou hast slain old *Polybus*:
 Incest and parricide, thy father's murderer!
 Out, thou infernal flame: now all is dark,
 All blind and dismal; most triumphant mischief!
 And now, while thus I stalk about the room,
 I challenge fate to find another wretch
 Like *Oedipus*! [Thunder, &c.]

Enter *Jocasta*, attended with lights, in a night-gown.

Oedip. Night, horror, death, confusion, hell, and
 Where am I? O, *Jocasta*, let me hold thee, (furies!
 Thus to my bosom, ages let me grasp thee:
 All that the hardest temper'd weather'd flesh,
 With fiercest human spirit inspir'd can dare
 Or do, I dare; but, oh, you pow'rs, this was
 By infinite degrees too much for man.
 Methinks my deafen'd ears
 Are burst; my eyes, as if they had been knock'd
 By some tempestuous hand, shoot flashing fire:
 That sleep should do this!

Joc. Then my fears were true.

Methought I heard your voice, and yet I doubted,
 Now roaring like the ocean, when the winds
 Fight with the waves; now, in a still small tone
 Your dying accents fell, as wrecking ships,
 After the dreadful yell, sink murmuring down,
 And bubble up a noise.

Oedip. Trust me, thou fairest, best of all thy kind,
 None e'er in dreams was tortur'd so before.
 Yet what most shocks the niceness of my temper,
 Ev'n far beyond the killing of my father,
 And my own death, is, that this horrid sleep
 Dash'd my sick fancy with an act of incest:
 I dreamt, *Jocasta*, that thou wert my mother;
 Which, tho' impossible, so damps my spirits,
 That I cou'd do a mischief on my self,
 Lest I should sleep and dream the like again.

Joc. O *Oedipus*, too well I understand you!
 I know the wrath of heav'n, the care of *Thebes*,
 The cries of its inhabitants, war's toils,

And

And thousand other labours of the state,
Are all referr'd to you, and ought to take you
For ever from *Jocasta*.

Oedip. Life of my life, and treasure of my soul,
Heav'n knows I love thee.

Joc. O, you think me vile,
And of an inclination so ignoble,
That I must hide me from your eyes for ever.
Be witness, gods, and strike *Jocasta* dead,
If an immodest thought, or low desire
Inflam'd my breast, since first our loves were lighted.

[*Kneeling.*]

Oedip. O rise, and add not, by thy cruel kindness,
A grief more sensible than all my torments.
Thou think'st my dreams are forg'd; but, by thy self,
The greatest oath, I swear, they are most true:
But, be they what they will, I here dismiss 'em;
Be gone, *Chimæras*, to your mother clouds:
Is there a fault in us? have we not search'd
The womb of heav'n, examin'd all the entrails
Of birds and beasts, and tir'd the prophet's art?
Yet what avails? he, and the gods together,
Seem like physicians, at a loss to help us:
Therefore, like wretches that have linger'd long,
We'll snatch the strongest cordial of our love;
To bed, my fair.

Ghost within. *Oedipus!*

Oedip. Ha! who calls?
Didst thou not hear a voice?

Joc. Alas! I did.

Ghost. *Jocasta!*

Joc. O my love, my lord, support me!

Oedip. Call louder, 'till you burst your airy forms:
Rest on my hand. Thus, arm'd with innocence,
I'll face these babbling *Dæmons* of the air:
In spite of ghosts, I'll on.
Tho' round my bed the furies plant their charms;
I'll break 'em, with *Jocasta* in my arms:
Clasp'd in the folds of love, I'll wait my doom;
And act my joys, tho' thunder shake the room.

[*Exeunt.*]

A C T III. S C E N E I.

S C E N E *A dark Grove.**Enter Creon, and Diocles.**Cre.* **T** I S better not to be, than be unhappy.*Dioc.* What mean you by these words ?*Cre.* 'Tis better not to be, than to be *Creon*.

A thinking soul is punishment enough ;
But when 'tis great, like mine, and wretched too,
Then every thought draws blood.

Dioc. You are not wretched.*Cre.* I am : my soul's ill married to my body.

I wou'd be young, be handsome, be belov'd :

Cou'd I but breathe my self into *Adrastus*.——*Dioc.* You rave ; call home your thoughts.*Cre.* I prithee, let my soul take air a while ;Were she in *Oedipus*, I were a king ;

Then I had kill'd a monster, gain'd a battle ;

And had my rival pris'ner ; brave, brave actions :

Why have not I done these ?

Dioc. Your fortune hinder'd.*Cre.* There's it : I have a soul to do 'em all :

But fortune will have nothing done that's great,

But by young, handsome fools : body and brawn.

Do all her work : *Hercules* was a fool,

And straight grew famous ; a mad boist'rous fool,

Nay worse, a woman's fool.

Fool is the stuff, of which heav'n makes a hero.

Dioc. A serpent ne'er becomes a flying dragon,

'Till he has eat a serpent.

Cre. Goes it there !I understand thee ; I must kill *Adrastus*.*Dioc.* Or not enjoy your mistress :*Eurydice* and he are pris'ners here,

But will not long be so : this tell-tale ghost,

Perhaps, will clear 'em both.

Cre. Well : 'tis resolv'd.*Dioc.* The princess walks this way ; you must not
meet her,

'Till this be done.

Cre.

Cre. I must.

Dioc. She hates your sight :
And more since you accus'd her.

Cre. Urge it not.
I cannot stay to tell thee my design ;
For she's too near.

Enter Eurydice.

How, madam, were your thoughts employ'd ?

Eur. On death, and thee.

Cre. Then were they not well sort'd : life and me
Had been the better match.

Eur. No, I was thinking
On two the most detested things in nature ;
And they are death and thee.

Cre. The thought of death to one near death is
O 'tis a fearful thing to be no more : (dreadful :
Or if to be, to wander after death ;
To walk, as spirits do, in brakes all day ;
And when the darkness comes, to glide in paths
That lead to graves : and in the silent vault,
Where lyes your own pale shroud, to hover o'er it,
Striving to enter your forbidden corpse ;
And often, often, vainly breathe your ghost
Into your lifeless lips :
Then, like a lone benighted traveller,
Shut out from lodging, shall your groans be answer'd
By whistling winds, whose every blast will shake
Your tender form to atoms.

Eur. Must I be this thin being ? and thus wander !
No quiet after death !

Cre. None : you must leave
This beauteous body ; all this youth and freshness
Must be no more the object of desire,
But a cold lump of clay ;
Which then your discontented ghost will leave,
And loath its former lodging.
This is the best of what comes after death,
Ev'n to the best.

Eur. What then shall be thy lot !
Eternal torments, baths of boiling sulphur :
Vicissitudes of fires, and then of frosts ;
And an old guardian fiend, ugly as thou art,

To hollow in thy ears at every lash ;
This for *Eurydice* ; these for her *Adraſtus*.

Cre. For her *Adraſtus* !

Eur. Yes, for her *Adraſtus* :
For death ſhall ne'er divide us : death, what's death !

Dioc. You ſeem'd to fear it.

Eur. But I more fear *Creon* :
To take that hunch-back'd monſter in my arms,
Th' excrescence of a man.

Dioc. to *Cre.* See what you've gain'd.

Eur. Death only can be dreadful to the bad :
To innocence, 'tis like a bug-bear drefs'd
To frighten children ; pull but off his maſque,
And he'll appear a friend.

Cre. You talk too ſlightly
Of death and hell. Let me inform you better.

Eur. You beſt can tell the news of your own country.

Dioc. Nay, now you are too ſharp.

Eur. Can I be ſo to one who has accus'd me
Of murder and of parricide ?

Cre. You provok'd me ;
And yet I only did thus far accuſe you,
As next of blood to *Laius* : be advis'd,
And you may live.

Eur. The means ?

Cre. 'Tis offer'd you.
The fool *Adraſtus* has accus'd himſelf.

Eur. He has indeed, to take the guilt from me.

Cre. He ſays, he loves you ; if he does, 'tis well :
He ne'er cou'd prove it in a better time.

Eur. Then death muſt be his recompence for love !

Cre. 'Tis a fool's juſt reward :
The wiſe can make a better uſe of life :
But 'tis the young man's pleaſure ; his ambition :
I grudge him not that favour.

Eur. When he's dead,
Where ſhall I find his equal !

Cre. Every where.
Fine empty things, like him,
The court ſwarms with 'em.
Fine fighting things ; in camps they are ſo common,
Crows feed on nothing elſe : plenty of fools ;

A glut of 'em in *Thebes*.

And fortune still takes care they shou'd be seen :

She places 'em aloft, o'th' topmost spoke

Of all her wheel : fools are the daily work

Of nature ; her vocation : if she form

A man, she loses by't, 'tis too expensive ;

'Twou'd make ten fools : a man's a prodigy.

Eur. That is, a *Creon* : O thou black detractor,

Who spitt'st thy venom against gods and men !

Thou enemy of eyes :

Thou who lov'st nothing, but what nothing loves,

And that's thy self : who hast conspir'd against

My life and fame, to make me loath'd by all ;

And only fit for thee.

But for *Adrastus*' death, good gods, his death !

What curse shall I invent ?

Dioc. No more, he's here.

Eur. He shall be ever here.

He who wou'd give his life ; give up his fame.——

Enter Adrastus.

If all the excellence of womankind

Were mine ;——no, 'tis too little all for him :

Were I made up of endless, endless joys——

Adr. And so thou art : the man who loves like
me,

Wou'd think ev'n infamy, the worst of ills,

Were cheaply purchas'd, were thy love the price :

Uncrown'd, a captive, nothing left, but honour ;

'Tis the last thing a prince should throw away ;

But when the storm grows loud, and threatens love,

Throw ev'n that over-board, for love's the jewel,

And last it must be kept.

Cre. to Dioc. Work him, be sure,

To rage, he's passionate ;

Make him th' aggressor.

Dioc. O false love ! false honour !

Cre. Dissembled both, and false !

Adr. Dar'st thou say this to me !

Cre. To you ! why, what are you, that I should fear
I am not *Lajus* : hear me, prince of *Argos*, (you ?

You give what's nothing, when you give your honour ;

'Tis gone ; 'tis lost in battle. For your love,

Vows made in wine are not so false as that :

You kill'd her father ; you confels'd you did : (ter!

A mighty argument to prove your passion to the daugh-

Adr. (Aside.) Gods, must I bear this brand, and not
The lie to his foul throat! (retort

Dioc. Basely you kill'd him.

Adr. (Aside.) O, I burn inward, my blood's all o'fire.

Alcides, when the poison'd shirt sat closest,

Had but an ague-fit to this my fever.

Yet, for *Eurydice*, ev'n this I'll suffer,

To free my love.——Well then I kill'd him basely.

Cre. Fairly, I'm sure, you cou'd not.

Dioc. Nor alone.

Cre. You had your fellow-thieves about you, prince;
They conquer'd, and you kill'd.

Adr. (Aside.) Down, swelling heart !

'Tis for thy princefs all---O my *Eurydice* !——[*To her.*

Eur. to : him. Reproach not thus the weakness of my
As if I cou'd not bear a shameful death, (sex,

Rather than see you burden'd with a crime

Of which I know you free.

Cre. You do ill, madam,

To let your head-long love triumph o'er nature :

Dare you defend your father's murderer ?

Eur. You know he kill'd him not.

Cre. Let him say so.

Dioc. See, he stands mute.

Cre. O pow'r of conscience, ev'n in wicked men !

It works, it stings, it will not let him utter

One syllable, one No, to clear himself

From the most base, detested, horrid act

That e'er cou'd stain a villain, not a prince.

Adr. Ha ! villain !

Dioc. Eccho to him, groves : cry villain.

Adr. Let me consider : did I murder *Lajus*,
Thus like a villain ?

Cre. Best revoke your words ;
And say, you kill'd him not.

Adr. Not like a villain ; prithee change me that
For any other lie.

Dioc. No, villain, villain.

Cre. You kill'd him not ! proclaim your innocence ;
Accuse

Accuse the princeſs : ſo I knew 'twou'd be.

Adr. I thank thee, thou inſtruct'ſt me.

No matter how I kill'd him.

Cre. (*Aſide.*) Cool'd again.

(*ence,*

Eur. Thou, who uſurp'ſt the ſacred name of conſci-
Did not thy own declare him innocent ?

To me declare him ſo ? the king ſhall know it.

Cre. You will not be believ'd, for I'll forſwear it.

Eur. What's now thy conſcience ?

Cre. 'Tis my ſlave, my drudge, my ſupple glove,
My upper garment, to put on, throw off,
As I think beſt : 'tis my obedient conſcience.

Adr. Infamous wretch !

Cre. My conſcience ſhall not do me the ill office
To ſave a rival's life ; when thou art dead,
(As dead thou ſhalt be, or be yet more baſe
Than thou think'ſt me,
By forfeiting her life, to ſave thy own.—)
Know this, and let it grate thy very ſoul,
She ſhall be mine : (ſhe is, if vows were binding.)
Mark me, the fruit of all thy faith and paſſion,
Ev'n of thy fooliſh death, ſhall all be mine.

Adr. Thine, ſay'ſt thou, monſter ;

Shall my love be thine ?

O, I can bear no more !

Thy cunning engines have with labour rais'd
My heavy anger, like a mighty weight,
To fall and crush thee dead.

See here thy nuptials ; ſee, thou raſh *Ixion*, [*Drum.*

Thy promis'd *Juno* vaniſh'd in a cloud ;

And in her room avenging thunder roars,

To blaſt thee thus.—come both—

[*Both draw.*

Cre. 'Twas what I wiſh'd :

Now ſee whoſe arm can launch the ſurer bolt,

And who's the better *Jove* !

[*Fight.*

Eur. Help ; murder, help !

*Enter Hæmon and guards, run betwixt them, and beat
down their ſwords.* (*ſcenes,*

Ham. Hold, hold your impious hands : I think thee
To whom this grove is hallow'd, have inspir'd you :

Now, by my ſoul, the holieſt earth of *Thebes*

You have profan'd with war. Nor tree, nor plant

Grows

Grows here, but what is fed with magick juice,
 All full of human souls, that cleave their barks,
 To dance at midnight by the moon's pale beams :
 At least two hundred years these reverend shades
 Have known no blood, but of black sheep and oxen,
 Shed by the priest's own hand to *Proserpine*.

Adr. Forgive a stranger's ignorance ; I knew not
 The honours of the place.

Hæm. Thou, *Creon*, didst.
 Not *Oedipus*, were all his foes here lodg'd,
 Durst violate the religion of these groves,
 To touch one single hair : but must, unarm'd,
 Parle, as in truce, or furlily avoid
 What most he long'd to kill.

Cre. I drew not first ;
 But in my own defence.

Adr. I was provok'd
 Beyond man's patience : all, reproach cou'd urge,
 Was us'd, to kindle one not apt to bear.

Hæm. 'Tis *Oedipus*, not I, must judge this act :
 Lord *Creon*, you and *Diocles* retire ;
Tiresias, and the brother-hood of priests,
 Approach the place : none at these rites assist,
 But you th' accus'd ; who, by the mouth of *Lajus*,
 Must be absolv'd, or doom'd.

Adr. I bear my fortune.

Eur. And I provoke my trial.

Hæm. 'Tis at hand :
 For see the prophet comes, with vervain crown'd ;
 The priests with yew ; a venerable band :
 We leave you to the gods.

[*Exit Hæm. with Cre. and Dioc.*
Enter Tiresias, led by Manto : the priests follow ; all
cloathed in long black habits.

Tir. Approach, ye lovers ;
 Ill-fated pair ! whom seeing not, I know :
 This day your kindly stars in heav'n were join'd :
 When lo ! an envious planet interpos'd,
 And threaten'd both with death. I fear, I fear.

Eur. Is there no god, so much a friend to love,
 Who can controul the malice of our fate ?
 Are they all deaf ? or have the giants heav'n ?

Tir.

Tir. The gods are just——

But how can finite measure infinite ?
Reason ! alas, it does not know it self !
Yet man, vain man, wou'd with this short-lin'd plummet,
Fathom the vast abyfs of heav'nly justice.
Whatever is, is in its causes just,
Since all things are by fate. But purblind man
Sees but a part o'th' chain, the nearest links ;
His eyes not carrying to that equal beam
That poizes all above.

Eur. Then we must die !

Tir. The danger's imminent this day.

Adr. Why then, there's one day less for human ills :
And who wou'd moan himself for suffering that,
Which in a day must pass ? something or nothing—
I shall be what I was again, before
I was *Adrastus* ;

Penurious heav'n, can'st thou not add a night
To our one day ? give me a night with her,
And I'll give all the rest.

Tir. She broke her vow

First made to *Creon* : but the time calls on :
And *Lajus*' death must now be made more plain.
How loath I am to have recourse to rites
So full of horror, that I once rejoice
I want the use of sight !——

Pr. The ceremonies stay.

Tir. Chuse the darkeſt part o'th' grove ;
Such as ghosts at noon-day love.
Dig a trench, and dig it nigh
Where the bones of *Lajus* lye.
Altars rais'd, of turf or ſtone,
Will th' infernal pow'rs have none.
Answer me, if this be done ?

All. Pr. 'Tis done.

Tir. Is the ſacrifice made fit ?
Draw her backward to the pit :
Draw the barren heifer back ;
Barren let her be, and black.
Cut the curled hair that grows
Full betwixt her horns and brows :
And turn your faces from the ſun :
Answer me, if this be done ?

All.

All. Pr. 'Tis done.

Tir. Pour in blood and blood-like wine,
To mother earth and *Proserpine* :
Mingle milk into the stream ;
Feast the ghosts that love the steam ;
Snatch a brand from funeral pile ;
Toss it in to make 'em boil ;
And turn your faces from the sun
Answer me, if all be done ?

All. Pr. All is done.

*Peal of thunder ; and flashes of lightning ; then groaning
below the stage.*

Man. O, what laments are those ? [pain,

Tir. The groans of ghosts, that cleave the earth with
And heave it up : they pant and stick half way.

[*The stage wholly darken'd.*

Man. And now a sudden darkness covers all,
True genuine night : night added to the groves ;
The fogs are blown full in the face of heav'n.

Tir. Am I but half obey'd ! infernal gods,
Must you have musick too ? then tune your voices,
And let 'em have such sounds as hell ne'er heard
Since *Orpheus* brib'd the shades.

Musick first. Then sing.

1. Hear, ye sullen pow'rs below :
Hear, ye taskers of the dead.
2. You that boiling cauldrons blow,
You that scum the molten lead.
3. You that pinch with red-hot tongs ;
1. You that drive the trembling beasts
Of poor, poor ghosts,
With your sharpen'd prongs ;
2. You that thrust 'em off the brim ;
3. You that plunge 'em when they swim :
1. Till they drown ;
Till they go
On a row
Down, down, down,
Ten thousand, thousand, thousand fathoms low.
Chorus. Till they drown, &c.

1. *Musick*

1. *Musick for a while*
Shall your cares beguile :
Wondring how your pains were eas'd ;
2. *And disdaining to be pleas'd ;*
3. *Till Alecto free the dead*
From their eternal bands ;
Till the snakes drop from her head,
And whip from out her hands.

1. *Come away*
Do not stay,
But obey
While we play,
For hell's broke up, and ghosts have holy-day.
Chorus. *Come away, &c.*

[A flash of lightning : the stage is made bright ; and the ghosts are seen passing betwixt the trees.

1. *Lajus !* 2. *Lajus !* 3. *Lajus !*

1. *Hear !* 2. *Hear !* 3. *Hear !*

Tir. Hear and appear.

By the Fates that spun thy thread !

Cho. Which are three.

Tir. By the furies fierce and dread !

Cho. Which are three.

Tir. By the judges of the dead !

Cho. Which are three.

Three times three !

Tir. By hell's blue flame :

By the Stygian lake :

And by Demogorgon's name,

At which ghosts quake,

Hear and appear.

[The ghost of *Lajus* rises arm'd in his chariot as he was slain. And behind his chariot sit the three who were murder'd with him.

Ghost of Lajus. Why hast thou drawn me from my pains below,

To suffer worse above ? to see the day,

And ~~be~~ more hated ? hell is heav'n to *Thebes*.

For pity send me back, where I may hide,

In willing night, this ignominious head :

In hell than the publick scorn ; and then

They hunt me for their sport, and hoot me as I fly :
Behold

Behold ev'n now they grin at my gor'd side,
And chatter at my wounds.

Tir. I pity thee:

Tell but why *Thebes* is for thy death accurst,
And I'll unbind the charm.

Ghost. O spare my shame.

Tir. Are these two innocent?

Ghost. Of my death they are.

But he who holds my crown, oh, must I speak!
Was doom'd to do what nature most abhors.
The gods foresaw it; and forbad his being,
Before he yet was born. I broke their laws,
And cloath'd with flesh his pre-existing soul.
Some kinder pow'r, too weak for destiny,
Took pity, and endu'd his new form'd mass
With temperance, justice, prudence, fortitude,
And ev'ry kingly virtue: but in vain;
For fate, that sent him hood-winkt to the world,
Perform'd its work by his mistaking hands.
Ask'st thou who murder'd me? 'twas *Oedipus*:
Who stains my bed with incest? *Oedipus*:
For whom then are you curst, but *Oedipus*?
He comes, the parricide, I cannot bear him:
My wounds ake at him: oh, his murd'rous breath.
Venoms my airy substance! hence with him,
Banish him; sweep him out; the plague he bears
Will blast your fields, and mark his way with ruin.
From *Thebes*, my throne, my bed, let him be driv'n;
Do you forbid him earth, and I'll forbid him heav'n.

[*Ghost descends.*]

Enter Oedipus, Creon, Hæmon, &c.

Oedip. What's this! methought some pestilential blast
Struck me just ent'ring and some unseen hand
Struggled to push me backward: tell me why
My hair stands bristling up! why my flesh trembles!
You stare at me! then hell has been among ye,
And some lag fiend yet lingers in the grove.

Tir. What omen saw'st thou ent'ring?

Oedip. A young stork,
That bore his aged parent on his back;
Till, weary with the weight, he shook him off,
And peck'd out both his eyes.

Act.

Adr. Oh, *Oedipus*!

Eur. Oh, wretched *Oedipus*!

Tir. O! fatal king!

Oedip. What mean these exclamations of my name?
I thank the gods, no secret thoughts reproach me:
No; I dare challenge heav'n to turn me outward,
And shake my soul quite empty in your sight.
Then wonder not, that I can bear unmov'd
These fix'd regards, and silent threats of eyes:
A generous fierceness dwells with innocence;
And conscious virtue is allow'd some pride.

Tir. Thou know'st not what thou say'st.

Oedip. What mutters he! tell me, *Eurydice*:
Thou shak'st: thy soul's a woman. Speak, *Adrastus*;
And boldly, as thou met'st my arms in fight.
Dar'st thou not speak? why then 'tis bad indeed:
Tiresias, thee I summon by thy priesthood,
Tell me what news from hell: where *Lajus* points,
And who's the guilty head?

Tir. Let me not answer.

Oedip. Be dumb then, and betray thy native soil
To farther plagues.

Tir. I dare not name him to thee.

Oedip. Dar'st thou converse with hell, and canst
An human name! (thou fear

Tir. Urge me no more to tell a thing, which known
Would make thee more unhappy: 'twill be found,
Tho' I am silent.

Oedip. Old and obstinate! then thou thy self
Art author or accomplice of this murder,
And shun'st the justice, which by publick bann
Thou hast incurr'd.

Tir. O, if the guilt were mine
It were not half so great know, wretched man,
Thou only, thou art guilty; thy own curse
Falls heavy on thy self.

Oedip. Speak this again:
But speak it to the winds when they are loudest:
Or to the raging seas, they'll hear as soon,
And sooner will believe.

Tir. Then hear me, heav'n,
For blushing thou hast seen it: hear me, earth,
Whose

Whose hollow womb could not contain this murder,
But sent it back to light : and, thou hell, hear me,
Whose own black seal has 'firm'd this horrid truth,
Oedipus murther'd *Lajus*.

Oedip. Rot the tongue,
And blasted be the mouth that spoke that lie.
Thou blind of sight, but thou more blind of soul.

Tir. Thy parents thought not so.

Oedip. Who were my parents?

Tir. Thou shalt know too soon.

Oedip. Why seek I truth from thee?
The smiles of courtiers, and the harlot's tears,
The tradesman's oaths, and mourning of an heir,
Are truths to what priests tell.
O why has priesthood privilege to lie,
And yet to be believ'd!—thy age protects thee——

Tir. Thou canst not kill me; 'tis not in thy fate,
As 'twas to kill thy father; wed thy mother;
And beget sons, thy brothers.

Oedip. Riddles, riddles!

Tir. Thou art thy self a riddle; a perplex
Obscure *Ænigma*, which when thou unty'st,
Thou shalt be found and lost.

Oedip. Impossible!

Adrastus, speak, and as thou art a king,
Whose royal word is sacred, clear my fame.

Adr. Wou'd I cou'd!

Oedip. Ha, wilt thou not? can that *Plebeian* vice
Of lying mount to kings! can they be tainted!
Then truth is lost on earth.

Cre. The cheat's too gross:

Adrastus is his oracle, and he,
The pious juggler, but *Adrastus*' organ:

Oedip. 'Tis plain, the priest's suborn'd to free the

Cre. And turn the guilt on you. (pris'ner.

Oedip. O, honest *Creon*, how hast thou been bely'd?

Eur. Hear me.

Cre. She's brib'd to save her lover's life.

Adr. If, *Oedipus*, thou think'st ——

Cre. Hear him not speak.

Adr. Then hear these holy men.

Cre. Priests, priests! all brib'd, all priests.

Oedip.

Oedip. *Adrastus*, I have found thee:
The malice of a vanquish'd man has seiz'd thee.

Adr. If envy and not truth——

Oedip. I'll hear no more: away with him.
Hæmon takes him off by force: Creon and Eurydice follow.

to Tir. Why stand'st thou, here, impostor!
So old, and yet so wicked——lie for gain!
And gain so short as age can promise thee!

Tir. So short a time as I have yet to live
Exceeds thy pointed hour; remember *Lajus*:
No more; if e'er we meet again, 'twill be
In mutual darkness; we shall feel before us
To reach each other's hand; remember *Lajus*.

[*Ex. Tiresias: priests follow.*]

Oedipus solus.

Remember *Lajus*! that's the burden still:
Murder and incest! but to hear 'em nam'd
My soul starts in me: the good centinel
Stands to her weapons, takes the first alarm
To guard me from such crimes——Did I kill *Lajus*?
Then I walk'd sleeping, in some frightful dream,
My soul then stole my body out by night;
And brought me back to bed e'er morning wake.
It cannot be ev'n this remotest way,
But some dark hint would juggle forward now,
And goad my memory——oh my *Jocasta*!

Enter Jocasta.

Joc. Why are you thus disturb'd?

Oedip. Why, would'st thou think it?
No less than murder!

Joc. Murder! what of murder?

Oedip. Is murder then no more? add parricide,
And incest; bear not these a frightful sound?

Joc. Alas!

Oedip. How poor a pity is, alas,
For two such crimes!——was *Lajus* us'd to lie?

Joc. Oh no: the most sincere, plain, honest man—
One who abhorr'd a lie.

Oedip. Then he has got that quality in hell:
He charges me——but why accuse I him?
I did not hear him speak it: they accuse me;

The

The priest, *Adrastus* and *Eurydice*,
Of murdering *Lajus*——tell me, while I think on't,
Has old *Tiresias* practis'd long this trade?

Joc. What trade?

Oedip. Why, this foretelling trade?

Joc. For many years.

Oedip. Has he before this day accus'd me?

Joc. Never.

Oedip. Have you e'er this enquir'd, who did this

Joc. Often; but still in vain. (murder?)

Oedip. I'm satisfy'd.

Then 'tis an infant lie; but one day old.

The oracle takes place before the priest;

The blood of *Lajus* was to murder *Lajus*;

I'm not of *Lajus*' blood.

Joc. Ev'n oracles

Are always doubtful, and are often forg'd:

Lajus had one, which never was fulfill'd,

Nor ever can be now.

Oedip. And what foretold it?

Joc. That he should have a son by me, fore-doom'd

The murderer of his father: true indeed,

A son was born; but to prevent that crime,

The wretched infant of a guilty fate,

Roll'd through his untry'd feet, and bound with cords,

On a bleak mountain, naked was expos'd:

The king himself liv'd many, many years,

And found a different fate; by robbers murder'd,

Where three ways meet: yet these are oracles;

And this the faith we owe 'em.

Oedip. Say'st thou, woman?

By heav'n thou hast awaken'd somewhat in me,

That shakes my very soul!

Joc. What, new disturbance! [said'st it!]

Oedip. Methought thou said'st—(or do I dream thou

This murder was on *Lajus*' person done,

Where three ways meet?

Joc. So common fame reports.

Oedip. Would it had ly'd.

Joc. Why, good my lord?

Oedip. No questions:

'Tis busy time with me; dispatch mine first;

Say where, where was it done!

Joc. Mean you the murder? (murder?)

Oedip. Could'st thou not answer without naming

Joc. They say in *Phocis*; on the verge that parts it
From *Daulia* and from *Delphos*.

Oedip. So!——how long! when happen'd this!

Joc. Some little time before you came to *Thebes*.

Oedip. What will the gods do with me!

Joc. What means that thought?

Oedip. Something: but 'tis not yet your turn to ask:
How old was *Laïus*, what his shape, his stature,
His action, and his mien? quick, quick, your answer——

Joc. Big made he was, and tall: his port was fierce,
Erect his countenance: manly majesty
Sat in his front, and darted from his eyes,
Commanding all he view'd: his hair just grizled,
As in a green old age: bate but his years,
You are his picture. (his picture?)

Oedip. [*Aside.*] Pray heav'n he drew me not! am I

Joc. So I have often told you.

Oedip. True, you have;
Add that but to the rest: how was the king
Attended when he travell'd?

Joc. By four servants:
He went out privately.

Oedip. Well counted still:
One 'scap'd I hear; what since became of him?

Joc. When he beheld you first, as king in *Thebes*,
He kneel'd, and trembling beg'd I wou'd dismiss him:
He had my leave; and now he lives retir'd.

Oedip. This man must be produc'd; he must, *Jocasta*:

Joc. He shall——yet have I leave to ask you why?

Oedip. Yes, you shall know: for where should I re-
The anguish of my soul, but in your breast? (pose)
I need not tell you *Corinth* claims my birth;
My parents, *Polybus* and *Merope*,
Two royal names; their only child am I.
It happen'd once; 'twas at a bridal feast,
One, warm with wine, told me I was a foun'ling,
Not the king's son; I, stung with his reproach,
Struck him: my father heard of it: the man
Was made ask pardon; and the business hush'd.

Joc.

Joc. 'Twas somewhat odd.

Oedip. And strangely it perplext me.
I stole away to *Delphos*, and implor'd
The god, to tell my certain parentage.
He bade me seek no farther :——'twas my fate
To kill my father, and pollute his bed,
By marrying her who bore me.

Joc. Vain, vain oracles !

Oedip. But yet they frighted me ;
I look'd on *Corinth* as a place accurst,
Resolv'd my destiny should wait in vain ;
And never catch me there.

Joc. Too nice a fear.

Oedip. Suspend your thoughts ; and flatter not too soon.
Just in the place you nam'd, where three ways meet,
And near that time, five persons I encounter'd ;
One was too like, (heav'n grant it prove not him)
Whom you describe for *Lajus* : insolent
And fierce they were, as men who liv'd on spoil.
I judg'd 'em robbers, and by force repell'd
The force they us'd : In short, four men I slew :
The fifth upon his knees demanding life,
My mercy gave it——bring me comfort now !
If I slew *Lajus*, what can be more wretched !
From *Thebes* and you my curse has banish'd me :
From *Corinth* fate.

Joc. Perplex not thus your mind ;
My husband fell by multitudes oppress'd,
So *Phorbas* said : this band you chanc'd to meet ;
And murder'd not my *Lajus*, but reveng'd him.

Oedip. There's all my hope : let *Phorbas* tell me this,
And I shall live again——
To you, good gods, I make my last appeal ;
Or clear my virtue, or my crime reveal :
If wand'ring in the maze of fate I run,
And backward trod the paths I sought to shun,
Impute my errors to your own decree ;
My hands are guilty, but my heart is free.

[*Ex. Amb.*

A C T IV. S C E N E I.

Enter Pyracmon and Creon.

Pyr. **S**ome business of import that triumph wears
You seem to go with; nor is't hard to guess
When you are pleas'd, by a malicious joy,
Whose red and fiery beams cast through your visage
A glowing pleasure. Sure you smile revenge,
And I could gladly hear.

Cre. Would't thou believe!

This giddy hair-brain'd king, whom old *Tiresias*
Has thunder-struck with heavy accusation,
Tho' conscious of no inward guilt, yet fears;
He fears *Jocasta*, fears himself, his shadow;
He fears the multitude; and, which is worth
An age of laughter, out of all mankind,
He chuses me to be his orator:
Swears that *Adrastus*, and the lean-look'd prophet,
Are joint conspirators; and wish'd me to
Appease the raving *Thebans*; which I swore
To do.

Pyr. A dangerous undertaking;
Directly opposite to your own interest.

Cre. No, dull *Pyracmon*; when I left his presence,
With all the wings with which revenge could imp
My flight, I gain'd the midst o'th' city;
There, standing on a pile of dead and dying,
I to the mad and sickly multitude,
With interrupting sobs, cry'd out, O *Thebes*,
O wretched *Thebes*, thy king, thy *Oedipus*,
This barbarous stranger, this usurper, monster,
Is by the oracle, the wise *Tiresias*,
Proclaim'd the murderer of the royal *Lajus*:
Jocasta too, no longer now my sister,
Is found complotter in the horrid deed.
Here I renounce all ties of blood and nature,
For thee, O *Thebes*, dear *Thebes*, poor bleeding *Thebes*!
And there I wept, and then the rabble howl'd,
And roar'd, and with a thousand antick mouths
Gabbled revenge, revenge was all the cry.

Pyr.

Pyr. This cannot fail: I see you on the throne;
And *Oedipus* cast out.

Cre. Then strait came on
Alcander, with a wild and bellowing crowd,
Whom he had wrought; I whisper'd him to join,
And head the forces while the heat was in 'em:
So to the palace I return'd, to meet
The king, and greet him with another story.
But see, he enters.

Enter Oedipus and Jocasta, attended.

Oedip. Said you that *Phorbas* is return'd, and yet
Intreats he may return, without being ask'd
Of ought concerning what we have discover'd?

Joc. He started when I told him your intent,
Replying, what he knew of that affair
Would give no satisfaction to the king;
Then, falling on his knees, begg'd, as for life,
To be dismiss'd from court: he trembled too,
As if convulsive death had seiz'd upon him;
And stammer'd in his abrupt pray'r so wildly,
That, had he been the murderer of *Lajus*,
Guilt and distraction could not have shook him more.

Oedip. By your description, sure as plagues and death
Lay waste our *Thebes*, some deed that shuns the light
Begot those fears: if thou respect'st my peace,
Secure him, dear *Jocasta*; for my genius
Shrinks at his name.

Joc. Oh! Rather let him go:
So my poor boding heart would have it be,
Without a reason.

Oedip. Hark, the *Thebans* come!
Therefore retire: and, once more, if thou lov'st me,
Let *Phorbas* be retain'd.

Joc. You shall, while;
Have life, be still obey'd:
In vain you sooth me with your soft inearments,
And set the fairest countenance to view;
Your gloomy eyes, my lord, betray a deadness
And inward languishing: that oracle
Eats like a subtil worm its venom'd way,
Preys on your heart, and rots the noble core,
How-e'er the beauteous out-side shews so lovely.

Oedip.

Oedip. O, thou wilt kill me with thy love's excess!
All, all is well; retire, the *Thebans* come. [*Ex. Joc.*]

Ghost. Oedipus!

Oedip. Ha! again that scream of woe!
Thrice have I heard, thrice since the morning dawn'd
It hollow'd loud, as if my guardian spirit
Call'd from some vaulted mansion, *Oedipus!*
Or is it but the work of melancholy?
When the sun sets, shadows, that shew'd at noon
But small, appear most long and terrible;
So, when we think fate hovers o'er our heads,
Our apprehensions shoot beyond all bounds,
Owls, ravens, crickets seem the watch of death,
Nature's worst vermin scare her god-like sons:
Ecchoes, the very leavings of a voice,
Grow babbling ghosts, and call us to our graves:
Each mole-hill thought swells to a huge *Olympus*,
While we fantastick dreamers heave and puff,
And sweat with an imagination's weight;
As if, like *Atlas*, with these mortal shoulders
We could sustain the burden of the world.

[*Creon comes forward.*]

Cre. O sacred Sir, my royal lord——

Oedip. What now?

Thou seem'st affrighted at some dreadful action,
Thy breath comes short, thy darted eyes are fixt
On me for aid, as if thou wert pursu'd:
I sent thee to the *Thebans*, speak thy wonder;
Fear not, this palace is a sanctuary,
The king himself's thy guard.

Cre. For me, alas,

(yours!

My life's not worth a thought, when weigh'd with
But fly, my lord, fly as your life is sacred;
Your fate is precious to your faithful *Creon*,
Who therefore, on his knees, thus prostrate begs
You would remove from *Thebes*, that vows your ruin.
When I but offer'd at your innocence,
They gather'd stones, and menac'd me with death,
And drove me through the streets, with imprecations
Against your sacred person: and those traitors
Insisted on your guilt, which curs'd *Tiresias*
Told, as from heav'n, was cause of their destruc

C

Oedip.

Oedip. Rise, worthy *Creon*, haste and take our guard,
 Rank 'em in equal parts upon the square,
 Then open every gate of this our palace,
 And let the torrent in. Hark, now it comes, [*Shout.*
 I hear 'em roar : be gone, and break down all
 The dams that would oppose their furious passage.

[*Ex. Creon with guards.*

Enter Adrastus, his sword drawn.

Adr. Your city
 Is all in arms, all bent to your destruction :
 I heard but now, where I was close confin'd,
 A thund'ring shout, which made my jaylors vanish,
 Cry, fire the palace ; where's the cruel king ?
 Yet, by th' infernal gods, those awful pow'rs
 That have accus'd you, which these ears have heard,
 And these eyes seen, I must believe you guiltless ;
 For, since I knew the royal *Oedipus*,
 I have observ'd in all his acts such truth
 And god-like clearness ; that, to the last gush
 Of blood and spirits, I'll defend his life,
 And here have sworn to perish by his side.

Oedip. Be witness, gods, how near this touches me !

[*Embracing him.*

O, say, what recompence can glory make ?

Adr. Defend your innocence, speak like your self,
 And awe the rebels with your dauntless virtue.
 But, hark ! the storm comes nearer.

Oedip. Let it come.

The force of majesty is never known
 But in a general wreck : then, then is seen
 The difference 'twixt a threshold and a throne.

Enter Creon, Pyracmon, Alcander, Tiresias, Thebans.

Alc. Where, where's this cruel king ? *Thebans*, behold
 There stands your plague, the ruin, desolation
 Of this unhappy state : speak ; shall I kill him ?
 Or shall he be cast out to banishment ?

All. Theb. To banishment, away with him.

Oedip. Hence, you barbarians, to your slavish distance ;
 Fix to the earth your sordid looks ; for he
 Who stirs, dares more than mad-men, fiends, or furies.
 Who dares to face me, by the gods, as well
 May brave the majesty of thund'ring *Jove*.

Did I for this relieve you when besieg'd
By this fierce prince, when coop'd within your walls,
And to the very brink of fate reduc'd ;
When lean-jaw'd famine made more havock of you,
Than does the plague? but I rejoyce I know you,
Know the base stuff that temper'd your vile souls :
The gods be prais'd, I needed not your empire,
Born to a greater, nobler, of my own ;
Nor shall the sceptre of the earth now win me
To rule such brutes, so barbarous a people.

Adr. Methinks, my lord, I see a sad repentance,
A general consternation spread among 'em.

Oedip. My reign is at an end ; yet e'er I finish——
I'll do a justice that becomes a monarch,
A monarch, who, i'th' midst of swords and javelins,
Dares act as on his throne, encompass'd round
With nations for his guard. *Alcander*, you
Are nobly born, therefore shall lose your head :

[*Seizes him.*]

Here, *Hæmon*, take him : but for this, and this,
Let cords dispatch 'em. Hence, away with 'em.

Tir. O sacred prince, pardon distracted *Thebes*,
Pardon her, if she acts by heaven's award ;
If that th' infernal spirits have declar'd
The depth of fate, and if our oracles
May speak, O do not too severely deal,
But let thy wretched *Thebes* at least complain :
If thou art guilty, heav'n will make it known ;
If innocent, then let *Tiresias* dye. (*Alcander* :

Oedip. I take thee at thy word. Run, haste, and save
I swear the prophet, or the king shall dye.
Be witness, all you *Thebans*, of my oath ;
And *Phorbas* be the umpire.

Tir. I submit.

[*Trumpets sound.*]

Oedip. What mean those trumpets?

Enter Hæmon with Alcander :

Hæm. From your native country,
Great Sir, the fam'd *Ægeon* is arriv'd,
That renown'd favourite of the king your father :
He comes as an ambassador from *Corinth*,
And sues for audience.

Oedip. Haste, *Hæmon*, fly, and tell him that I burn

T' embrace him.

Ham. The queen, my lord, at present holds him
In private conference ; but behold her here.

Enter Jocasta, Eurydice, &c.

Joc. Hail, happy *Oedipus*, happiest of kings !
Henceforth be blest, blest as thou canst desire,
Sleep without fears the blackest nights away ;
Let furies haunt thy palace, thou shalt sleep
Secure, thy slumbers shall be soft and gentle
As infants dreams.

Oedip. What does the soul of all my joys intend ?
And whither would this rapture ?

Joc. O, I could rave,
Pull down those lying fanes, and burn that vault,
From whence resounded those false oracles ;
That robb'd my love of rest : if we must pray,
Rear in the streets bright altars to the gods,
Let virgins hands adorn the sacrifice ;
And not a grey-beard forging priest come near,
To pry into the bowels of the victim,
And with his dotage mad the gaping world.
But see, the oracle that I will trust,
True as the gods, and affable as men.

Enter Ægeon ; kneels.

Oedip. O, to my arms, welcome, my dear *Ægeon* ;
Ten thousand welcomes ; O my foster-father,
Welcome as mercy to a man condemn'd,
Welcome to me, As to a sinking mariner,
The lucky plank that bears him to the shore !
But speak, O tell me, what so mighty joy
Is this thou bring'st, which so transports *Jocasta* ?

Joc. Peace, peace, *Ægeon*, let *Jocasta* tell him !
O that I could for ever charm, as now,
My dearest *Oedipus* : thy royal father,
Polybus, king of *Corinth*, is no more.

Oedip. Ha ! can it be ? *Ægeon*, answer me,
And speak in short, what my *Jocasta*'s transport
May over-do.

Æge. Since in few words, my royal lord, you ask
To know the truth ; king *Polybus* is dead.

Oedip. O all you pow'rs, is't possible ? what, dead !
But

But that the tempest of my joy may rise
By just degrees, and hit at last the stars,
Say, how, how dy'd he? ha! by sword, by fire,
Or water? by assassins, or poyson? speak:
Or did he languish under some disease?

Æge. Of no distemper, of no blast he dy'd,
But fell like autumn-fruit that mellow'd long:
Ev'n wonder'd at, because he dropt no sooner.
Fate seem'd to wind him up for fourscore years;
Yet freshly ran he on ten winters more:
Till, like a clock worn out with eating time,
The wheels of weary life at last stood still.

Oedip. O, let me press thee in my youthful arms,
And smother thy old age in my embraces.
Yes *Thebans*, yes *Jocasta*, yes *Adrastus*,
Old *Polybus*, the king my father's dead.
Fires shall be kindled in the midst of *Thebes*;
I th' midst of tumult, wars, and pestilence,
I will rejoice for *Polybus* his death.
Know, be it known to th' limits of the world;
Yet farther, let it pass yon dazling roof,
The mansion of the gods, and strike 'em deaf
With everlasting peals of thund'ring joy.

Tir. Fate! nature! fortune! what is all this world?

Oedip. Now, dotard; now, thou blind old wizard pro-
Where are your boding ghosts, your altars now; [phet,
Your birds of knowledge, that, in dusky air,
Chatter futurity? and where are now
Your oracles, that call'd me parricide?
Is he not dead? deep laid in's monument?

And was not I in *Thebes* when fate attack'd him?

Avant, begone, you vizors of the gods!

Were I as other sons, now I should weep;

But, as I am, I've reason to rejoice:

And will, tho' his cold shade should rise and blast me.

O, for this death, let waters break their bounds,

Rocks, vallies, hills, with splitting *Io's* ring:

Io Jocasta, Io Pæan sing.

Tir. Who would not now conclude a happy end?

But all fate's turns are swift and unexpected.

Æge. Your royal mother *Merope*, as if
She had no soul since you forsook the land,

Waves all the neighb'ring princes that adore her. (speak.

Oedip. Waves all the princes! poor heart! for what? O

Æge. She, tho' in full-blown flow'r of glorious beauty,
Grows cold, ev'n in the summer of her age: (ty,
And, for your sake, has sworn to dye unmarried.

Oedip. How! for my sake, dye, and not marry! O,
My fit returns.

Æge. This diamond, with a thousand kisses blest,
With thousand sighs and wishes for your safety,
She charg'd me give you, with the general homage
Of our *Corinthian* lords.

Oedip. There's magick in it, take it from my sight;
There's not a beam it darts, but carries hell,
Hot flashing lust, and necromantick incest:
Take it from these sick eyes, oh hide it from me.
No, my *Jocasta*, tho' *Thebes* cast me out,
While *Merope*'s alive, I'll ne'er return.
O, rather let me walk round the wide world
A beggar, than accept a diadem
On such abhorr'd conditions.

Joc. You make, my lord, your own unhappiness,
By these extravagant and needless fears. (ther

Oedip. Needless! O, all you gods! by heav'n I'd rather
Embrue my arms up to my very shoulders
In the dear entrails of the best of fathers,
Than offer at the execrable act
Of damned incest: therefore no more of her.

Æge. And why, O sacred fir, if subjects may
Presume to look into their monarch's breast,
Why should the chaste and spotless *Merope*
Infuse such thoughts as I must blush to name?

Oedip. Because the god of *Delphos* did forewarn me,
With thund'ring oracles.

Æge. May I intreat to know 'em?

Oedip. Yes, my *Ægeon*; but the sad remembrance
Quite blasts my soul: see then the swelling priest!
Methinks I have his image now in view;
He mounts the *Tripous*, in a minute's space,
His clouded head knocks at the temple roof,
While from his mouth these dismal words are heard:

" Fly,

"Fly, wretch, whom fate has doom'd thy father's blood
to spill, [fill.]"

"And, with incestuous births, thy mother's womb to
Æge. Is this the cause

Why you refuse the diadem of *Corinth*?

Oedip. The cause! why is it not a monstrous one?

Æge. Great sir, you may return; and tho' you should
Enjoy the queen (which all the gods forbid)

The act would prove no incest.

Oedip. How, *Ægeon*?

Tho' I enjoy'd my mother, not incestuous!

Thou rav'st, and so do I; and these all catch

My madness; look, they're dead with deep distraction:

Not incest! what, not incest with my mother?

Æge. My lord, queen *Merope* is not your mother.

Oedip. Ha! did I hear thee right? not *Merope*
My mother!

Æge. Nor was *Polybus* your father. (spent

Oedip. Then all my days and nights must now be

In curious search, to find out those dark parents

Who gave me to the world; speak then, *Ægeon*,

By all the gods celestial and infernal,

By all the ties of nature, blood, and friendship,

Conceal not from this rack'd despairing king

A point or smallest grain of what thou know'st:

Speak then, O answer to my doubts directly.

If royal *Polybus* was not my father,

Why was I call'd his son?

Æge. He, from my arms,

Receiv'd you as the fairest gift of nature.

Not but you were adorn'd with all the riches

That empire could bestow in costly mantles,

Upon its infant heir.

Oedip. But was I made the heir of *Corinth*'s crown,
Because *Ægeon*'s hands presented me?

Æge. By my advice, being past all hope of children,
He took, embrac'd, and own'd you for his son.

Oedip. Perhaps I then am your's; instruct me, Sir:

If it be so, I'll kneel and weep before you,

With all th'obedience of a penitent child,

Imploring pardon. Kill me if you please,

I will not writhe my body at the wound:

But sink upon your feet with a last sigh,
And ask forgiveness with my dying hands.

Æge. O rise, and call not to this aged cheek
The little blood which should keep warm my heart ;
You are not mine, nor ought I to be blest
With such a God-like off-spring. Sir, I found you
Upon the mount *Cithæron*.

Oedip. O speak, go on, the air grows sensible
Of the great things you utter, and is calm :
The hurry'd orbs, with storms so rack'd of late,
Seem to stand still, as if that *Jove* were talking.
Cithæron! speak, the valley of *Cithæron!*

Æge. Oft-times before, I thither did resort,
Charm'd with the conversation of a man
Who led a rural life, and had command
O'er all the shepherds, who about those vales
Tended their numerous flocks : in this man's arms
I saw you smiling at a fatal-dagger,
Whose point he often offer'd at your throat ;
But then you smil'd, and then he drew it back,
Then lifted it again, you smil'd again :
Till he at last in fury threw it from him,
And cry'd aloud, the gods forbid thy death.
Then I rush'd in, and after some discourse,
To me he did bequeath your innocent life ;
And I, the welcome care to *Polybus*.

Oedip. To whom belong'd the master of the shepherds ?

Æge. His name I knew not, or I have forgot :
That he was of the family of *Lajus*,
I well remember.

Oedip. And is your friend alive ? for if he be,
I'll buy his presence, tho' it cost my crown.

Æge. Your menial attendants best can tell
Whether he lives, or not ; and who has now
His place.

Joc. Winds, bear me to some barren island,
Where print of human feet was never seen,
O'ergrown with weeds of such a monstrous height,
Their baleful tops are wash'd with bellying clouds :
Beneath whose venomous shade I may have vent
For horror, that would blast the barbarous world.

Oedip. If there be any here that knows the person
Whom

Whom he describ'd, I charge him on his life
To speak; concealment shall be sudden death :
But he who brings him forth, shall have reward
Beyond ambition's lust.

Tir. His name is *Phorbas* :

Jocasta knows him well ; but if I may
Advise, rest where you are, and seek no farther.

Oedip. Then all goes well, since *Phorbas* is secur'd
By my *Jocasta*. Haste, and bring him forth :
My love, my queen, give orders. Ha ! what mean
These tears, and groans, and strugglings ? speak, my
What are thy troubles ? (fair,

Joc. Yours ; and yours are mine :
Let me conjure you, take the prophet's counsel,
And let this *Phorbas* go.

Oedip. Not for the world.
By all the gods, I'll know my birth, tho' death
Attends the search : I have already past
The middle of the stream, and to return
Seems greater labour, than to venture o'er :
Therefore produce him.

Joc. Once more, by the gods,
I beg, my *Oedipus*, my lord, my life,
My love, my all, my only utmost hope,
I beg you, banish *Phorbas*. O, the gods !
I kneel, that you may grant this first request.
Deny me all things else ; but, for my sake,
And as you prize your own eternal quiet,
Never let *Phorbas* come into your presence.

Oedip. You must be rais'd, and *Phorbas* shall appear,
Tho' his dread eyes were *Basilisks*. Guards, haite,
Search the queen's lodgings ; find, and force him hither.

[*Exeunt guards.*]

Joc. O, *Oedipus*, yet send,
And stop their entrance, e're it be too late :
Unless you wish to see *Jocasta* rent
With furies, slain out-right with mere distraction.
Keep from your eyes and mine the dreadful *Phorbas*.
Forbear this search, I'll think you more than mortal :
Will you yet hear me ?

Oedip. Tempests will be heard,
And waves will dash, tho' rocks their basis keep —

But see, they enter. If thou truly lov'st me,
Either forbear this subject, or retire.

Enter Hæmon, guards, with Phorbas.

Joc. Prepare then, wretched prince, prepare to hear
A story, that shall turn thee into stone.

Could there be hewn a monstrous gap in nature,
A flaw made through the centre, by some god,
Through which the groans of ghosts might strike thy
ears,

They would not wound thee, as this story will.

Hark, hark! a hollow voice calls out aloud,

Jocasta: yes, I'll to the royal bed,

Where first the mysteries of our loves were acted,

And double dye it with imperial crimson;

Tear off this curling hair,

Be gorg'd with fire, stab every vital part,

And, when at last I'm slain, to crown the horror,

My poor tormented ghost shall cleave the ground,

To try if hell can yet more deeply wound. [*Ex.*

Oedip. She's gone; and as she went, methought her
Grew larger, while a thousand frantick spirits (eyes

Seething, like rising bubbles, on the brim,

Peep'd from the watry brink, and glow'd upon me.

I'll seek no more; but hush my genius up

That throws me on my fate.—Impossible!

O wretched man, whose too too busie thoughts

Ride swifter than the galloping heav'ns round,

With an eternal hurry of the soul:

Nay, there's a time when ev'n the rowling year

Seems to stand still, dead calms are in the ocean,

When not a breath disturbs the drowsy waves:

But man, the very monster of the world,

Is ne'er at rest, the soul for ever wakes.

Come then, since destiny thus drives us on,

Let's know the bottom. *Hæmon*, you I sent:

Where is that *Phorbas*?

Hæm. Here, my royal lord.

Oedip. Speak first, *Ægeon*, say, is this the man?

Æge. My lord, it is: tho' time has plough'd that
With many furrows since I saw it first; (face

Yet I'm too well acquainted with the ground,

Quite to forget it.

Oedip. Peace; stand back a while.

Come

Come hither, friend ; I hear thy name is *Phorbas*.
Why dost thou turn thy face ? I charge thee answer
To what I shall enquire : wert thou not once
The servant of king *Lajus* here in *Thebes* ?

Phor. I was, great Sir, his true and faithful servant;
Born and bred up in court, no foreign slave. (ment?

Oedip. What office hadst thou ? what was thy employ-

Phor. He made me lord of all his rural pleasures;
For much he lov'd 'em : oft was entertain'd,
With sporting swains, o'er whom I had command.

Oedip. Where was thy residence ? to what part o'th'
Didst thou most frequently resort ? (country

Phor. To mount *Cithæron*, and the pleasant vallies,
Which all about lye shadowing its large feet.

Oedip. Come forth, *Ægeon*. Ha ! why start'st thou,
Phorbas ?

Forward, I say, and face to face confront him ;
Look wistly on him, through him, if thou canst,
And tell me, on thy life, say, dost thou know him ?
Didst thou e'er see him ? E'er converse with him
Near mount *Cithæron* ?

Phor. Who, my lord, this man ?

Oedip. This man, this old, this venerable man :
Speak, did'st thou ever meet him there ?

Phor. Where, sacred Sir ?

Oedip. Near mount *Cithæron* ; answer to the pur-
'Tis a king speaks ; and royal minutes are (pose :
Of much more worth than thousand vulgar years :
Didst thou e'er see this man near mount *Cithæron* ?

Phor. Most sure, my lord, I have seen lines like those
His visage bears ; but know not where nor when.

Æge. Is't possible you should forget your ancient
There are perhaps (friend ?

Particulars, which may excite your dead remembrance.
Have you forgot I took an infant from you,
Doom'd to be murder'd in that gloomy vale ?

'The swadling-bands were purple, wrought with gold.
Have you forgot too how you wept, and begg'd
That I should breed him up, and ask no more ?

Phor. What-e'er I begg'd ; thou, like a dotard,
More than is requisite : and what of this ? (speak't
Why is it mention'd now ? and why, O why

Dost

Dost thou betray the secrets of thy friend?

Æge. Be not too rash. That infant grew at last
A king: and here the happy monarch stands.

Phor. Ha! whither would'st thou? O what hast
thou utter'd!

For what thou hast said, death strike thee dumb for ever.

Oedip. Forbear to curse the innocent; and be
Accurs'd thy self, thou shifting traitor, villain,
Damn'd hypocrite, equivocating slave.

Phor. O heav'n's! wherein, my lord, have I offended?

Oedip. Why speak you not according to my charge?
Bring forth the rack: since mildness cannot win you,
Torments shall force.

Phor. Hold, hold, O dreadful Sir;
You will not rack an innocent old man?

Oedip. Speak then.

Phor. Alas, what would you have me say?

Oedip. Did this old man take from your arms an in-

Phor. He did: and, oh! I wish to all the gods, (fant?
Phorbas had perish'd in that very moment.

Oedip. Moment! thou shalt be hours, days, years a
Here, bind his hands; he dallies with my fury: (dying.
But I shall find a way——

Phor. My lord, I said
I gave the infant to him.

Oedip. Was he thy own, or given thee by another?

Phor. He was not mine; but given me by another.

Oedip. Whence? and from whom? what city? of,
what house?

Phor. O, royal Sir, I bow me to the ground,
Would I could sink beneath it: by the gods,
I do conjure you to enquire no more.

Oedip. Furies and hell! *Hæmon*, bring forth the rack;
Fetch hither cords, and knives, and sulphurous flames:
He shall be bound, and gash'd, his skin flea'd off,
And burnt alive.

Phor. O spare my age.

Oedip. Rise then, and speak.

Phor. Dread Sir, I will.

Oedip. Who gave that infant to thee?

Phor. One of king *Lajus'* family.

Oedip. O, you immortal gods! but say, who was't?
Which

Which of the family of *Lajus* gave it?
A servant ; or one of the royal blood ?

Phor. O wretched state ! I dye, unless I speak ;
And, if I speak, most certain death attends me.

Oedip. Thou shalt not dye. Speak then, who was
it ? speak,

While I have sense to understand the horror ;
For I grow cold.

Phor. The queen *Jocasta* told me
It was her son by *Lajus*.

Oedip. O you gods !——but did she give it thee ?

Phor. My lord, she did. (my heart :

Oedip. Wherefore ? for what ?——O break not yet
Tho' my eyes burst, no matter : wilt thou tell me,
Or must I ask for ever ? for what end ?

Why gave she thee her child ?

Phor. To murder it.

Oedip. O more than savage ! murder her own bowels !
Without a cause !

Phor. There was a dreadful one,
Which had foretold, that most unhappy son
Should kill his father, and enjoy his mother.

Oedip. But one thing more.

Jocasta told me thou wert by the chariot
When the old king was slain : speak, I conjure thee,
For I shall never ask thee ought again,
What was the number of th' assassins ?

Phor. The dreadful deed was acted but by one ;
And sure that one had much of your resemblance.

Oedip. 'Tis well ! I thank you, gods ! 'tis wondrous
Daggers, and poison ! O there is no need : (well !
For my dispatch : and you, you merciless pow'rs,
Hoard up your thunder-stones ; keep, keep your bolts
For crimes of little note. [Falls.

Adr. Help, *Hæmon*, help, and bow him gently forward ;
Chafe, chafe his temples : how the mighty spirits,
Half strangled with the damp his sorrows rais'd,
Struggle for vent : but see, he breaths again,
And vigorous nature breaks through all opposition.
How fares my royal friend ?

Oedip. The worse for you.

O barbarous men, and oh the hated light !

Why

Why did you force me back to curse the day ?
 To curse my friends; to blast with this dark breath
 The yet untainted earth and circling air ?
 To raise new plagues, and call new vengeance down ?
 Why did you tempt the gods, and dare to touch me ?
 Methinks there's not a hand that grasps this hell,
 But should run up, like flax, all blazing fire.
 Stand from this spot, I wish you as my friends,
 And come not near me, lest the gaping earth
 Swallow you too——Lo, I am gone already.

[*Draws, and claps his sword to his breast, which
 Adrastus strikes away with his foot.*]

Adr. You shall no more be trusted with your life :
Creon, Alcander, Hæmon, help to hold him.

Oedip. Cruel *Adrastus* ! wilt thou, *Hæmon*, too ?
 Are these the obligations of my friends ?

O worse than worst of my most barbarous foes !

Dear, dear *Adrastus*, look with half an eye
 On my unheard-of woes, and judge thy self,
 If it be fit that such a wretch should live !

O, by these melting eyes, unus'd to weep,

With all the low submissions of a slave,

I do conjure thee give my horrors way ;

Talk not of life, for that will make me rave :

As well thou may'st advise a tortur'd wretch,

All mangled o'er from head to foot with wounds,

And his bones broke, to wait a better day.

Adr. My lord, you ask me things impossible ;

And I with justice should be thought your foe,

To leave you in this tempest of your soul.

Tho' banish'd *Thebes*, in *Corinth* you may reign ;

Th' infernal pow'rs themselves exact no more :

Calm then your rage, and once more seek the gods.

Oedip. I'll have no more to do with gods, nor men :

Hence, from my arms, avant. Enjoy thy mother !

What, violate, with bestial appetite,

The sacred veils that wrapt thee yet unborn !

This is not to be borne ! hence ; off, I say ;

For they who lett my vengeance, make themselves

Accomplices in my most horrid guilt.

Adr. Let it be so ; we'll fence heav'n's fury from you,
 And suffer all together : this perhaps,

When

When ruin comes, may help to break your fall.

Oedip. O that, as oft I have at *Athens* seen
The stage arise, and the big clouds descend;
So now in very deed I might behold
The pond'rous earth, and all yon marble roof
Meet, like the hands of *Jove*, and crush mankind:
For all the elements, and all the pow'rs
Celestial, nay, terrestrial and infernal,
Conspire the wreck of out-cast *Oedipus*.
Fall darkness then, and everlasting night
Shadow the globe, may the sun never dawn,
The silver moon be blotted from her orb;
And for an universal rout of nature
Through all the inmost chambers of the sky,
May there not be a glimpse, one starry spark,
But gods meet gods, and juggle in the dark.
That jars my rise, and wrath divine be hurl'd,
Which may to atoms shake the solid world. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

Enter Creon, Alcander, and Pyracmon.

Cre. **T** *Hebes* is at length my own; and all my wishes,
Which sure were great as royalty e'er form'd,
Fortune and my auspicious stars have crown'd.
O diadem, thou centre of ambition,
Where all its different lines are reconcil'd,
As if thou wert the burning-glass of glory!

Pyr. Might I be counsellor, I would intreat you
To cool a little, Sir; find out *Eurydice*;
And, with the resolution of a man
Mark'd out for greatness, give the fatal choice
Of death or marriage.

Alc. Survey curs'd *Oedipus*,
As one who, tho' unfortunate, 's belov'd,
Thought innocent, and therefore much lamented:
By all the *Thebans*; you must mark him dead:
Since nothing but his death, not banishment,
Can give assurance to your doubtful reign.

Cre.

Cre. Well have you done, to snatch me from the
Of racking transport, where the little streams. (storm
Of love, revenge, and all the under passions,
As waters are by sucking whirl-pools drawn,
Were quite devour'd in the vast gulph of empire :
Therefore, *Pyracmon*, as you boldly urg'd,
Eurydice shall die, or be my bride.

Alcander, summon to their master's aid
My menial servants, and all those whom change
Of state, and hope of the new monarch's favour,
Can win to take our part : away. What now ?
[*Ex. Alcander.*

Enter Hæmon.

When *Hæmon* weeps, without the help of ghosts
I may foretel there is a fatal cause.

Hæm. Is't possible you should be ignorant
Of what has happen'd to the desperate king ?

Cre. I know no more, but that he was conducted
Into his closet, where I saw him fling
His trembling body on the royal bed ;
All left him there, at his desire, alone :
But sure no ill, unless he dy'd with grief,
Could happen, for you bore his sword away.

Hæm. I did ; and, having lock'd the door, I stood ;
And through a chink I found, not only heard,
But saw him, when he thought no eye beheld him :
At first, deep sighs heav'd from his woful heart,
Murmurs, and groans, that shook the outward rooms,
And art thou still alive, oh wretch ! he cry'd :
Then groan'd again, as if his sorrowful soul
Had crack'd the strings of life, and burst away.

Cre. I weep to hear; how then shou'd I have griev'd;
Had I beheld this wondrous heap of sorrow !
But, to the fatal period.

Hæm. Thrice he struck,
With all his force, his hollow-groaning breast,
And thus, with out-cries, to himself complain'd.
But thou canst weep then, and thou think'st 'tis well,
These bubbles of the shallowest emptiest sorrow,
Which children vent for toys, and women rain
For any trifle their fond hearts are set on ;
Yet these thou think'st are ample satisfaction

For.

For bloodiest murder, and for burning lust :
 No, parricide ; if thou must weep, weep blood ;
 Weep eyes, instead of tears : O, by the gods,
 'Tis greatly thought, he cry'd, and fits my woes.
 Which said, he smil'd revengefully, and leapt
 Upon the floor ; thence gazing at the skies,
 His eye-balls fiery red, and glowing vengeance ;
 Gods, I accuse you not, tho' I no more
 Will view your heav'n, 'till with more durable glasses,
 The mighty soul's immortal perspectives,
 I find your dazling beings : take, he cry'd,
 Take, eyes, your last, your fatal farewell-view.
 When with a groan, that seem'd the call of death,
 With horrid force, lifting his impious hands,
 He snatch'd, he tore, from forth their bloody orbs,
 The balls of fight, and dash'd 'em on the ground.

Cre. A master-piece of horror, new and dreadful !

Hæm. I ran to succour him ; but, oh ! too late ;
 For he had pluck'd the remnant strings away.
 What then remains, but that I find *Tiresias*,
 Who, with his wisdom, may allay those furies
 That haunt his gloomy soul ? [Exit.]

Cre. Heav'n will reward
 Thy care ; most honest, faithful, foolish *Hamon* !
 But see, *Alcander* enters, well attended.

Enter Alcander, attended.

I see, thou hast been diligent.

Alc. Nothing these,
 For number, to the crowds that soon will follow ;
 Be resolute,
 And call your utmost fury to revenge.

Cre. Ha ! thou hast giv'n
 Th' alarm to cruelty ; and never may
 These eyes be clos'd, 'till they behold *Adrastus*
 Stretch'd at the feet of false *Eurydice*.
 But see, they're here ! retire a while, and mark.

Enter Adrastus, and Eurydice, attended.

Adr. Alas, *Eurydice*, what fond rash man,
 What inconsiderate and ambitious fool,
 That shall hereafter read the fate of *Oedipus*,
 Will dare, with his frail hand, to grasp a sceptre ?

Eur. 'Tis true, a crown seems dreadful, and I wish
That

That you and I, more lowly plac'd, might pass
Our softer hours in humble cells away :
Not but I love you to that infinite height,
I could (O wondrous proof of fiercest love !)
Be greatly wretched in a court with you.

Adr. Take then this most lov'd innocence away ;
Fly from tumultuous *Thebes*, from blood and murder,
Fly from the author of all villanies,
Rapes, death, and treason, from that fury *Creon* :
Vouchsafe that I, o'er-joy'd, may bear thee hence,
And at your feet present the crown of *Argos*.

[*Creon and attendants come up to him.*]

Cre. I have o'er-heard thy black design, *Adrastus* ;
And therefore, as a traitor to this state,
Death ought to be thy lot : let it suffice
That *Thebes* surveys thee as a prince ; abuse not
Her proffer'd mercy, but retire betimes,
Lest she repent, and hasten on thy doom.

Adr. Think not, most abject, most abhorr'd of
men,

Adrastus will vouchsafe to answer thee ;
Thebans, to you I justify my love :
I have address my pray'rs to this fair princess ;
But, if I ever meant a violence,
Or thought to ravish, as that traitor did,
What humblest adorations could not win ;
Brand me, ye gods, blot me with foul dishonour,
And let men curse me by the name of *Creon* !

Eur. Hear me, O *Thebans*, if you dread the wrath
Of her whom fate ordain'd to be your queen,
Hear me, and dare not, as you prize your lives,
To take the part of that rebellious traitor.
By the decree of royal *Oedipus*,
By queen *Jocasta*'s order, by what's more,
My own dear vows of everlasting love,
I here resign to prince *Adrastus*' arms
All that the world can make me mistress of.

Cre. O perjur'd woman !
Draw all ; and, when I give the word, fall on.
Traitor, resign the princess, or this moment
Expect, with all those most unfortunate wretches,

Upon

Upon this spot straight to be hewn in pieces.

Adr. No, villain, no ; with twice those odds of men,
I doubt not in this cause to vanquish thee.

Captain, remember, to your care I give
My love ; ten thousand thousand times more dear
Than life or liberty.

Cre. Fall on, *Alcander* ;
Pyrracmen, you and I must wheel about
For nobler game, the princess.

Adr. Ah, traitor, dost thou shun me ?
Follow, follow,

My brave companions ; see, the cowards fly.

[*Ex. fighting, Creon's party beaten off by Adrastus.*

Enter Oedipus.

Oedip. O, 'tis too little this, thy loss of fight,
What has it done ? I shall be gaz'd at now
The more ; be pointed at, There goes the monster !
Nor have I hid my horrors from my self ;
For tho' corporeal light be lost for ever,
The bright reflecting soul, thro' glaring opticks,
Presents in larger size her black ideas,
Doubling the bloody prospect of my crimes :
Holds fancy down, and makes her act again,
With wife and mother ; tortures, hell and furies !
Ha ! now the baleful offspring's brought to light !
In horrid form they rank themselves before me ;
What shall I call this medley of creation ?
Here one, with all th' obedience of a son,
Borrowing *Jocasta's* look, kneels at my feet,
And calls me father ; there a sturdy boy,
Resembling *Lajus* just as when I kill'd him,
Bears up, and with his cold hand grasping mine,
Cries out, how fares my brother *Oedipus* ?
What, sons and brothers ! sisters and daughters too !
Fly, all, be gone, fly from my whirling brain ;
Hence, incest, murder ! hence, you ghastly figures !
O gods ! gods, answer ; is there any mean ?
Let me go mad, or die.

Enter Jocasta.

Joc. Where, where is this most wretched of mankind,
This stately image of imperial sorrow,

Whose

Whose story told, whose very name but mention'd,
Would cool the rage of fevers, and unlock
The hand of lust from the pale virgin's hair,
And throw the ravisher before her feet?

Oedip. By all my fears, I think *Jocasta's* voice!
Hence, fly; be gone: O thou far worse than worst
Of damning charmers! O abhorr'd, loath'd creature!
Fly, by the gods, or by the fiends, I charge thee,
Far as the east, west, north, or south of heav'n,
But think not thou shalt ever enter there:
The golden gates are barr'd with adamant
'Gainst thee, and me; and the celestial guards,
Still as we rise, will dash our spirits down.

Joc. O wretched pair! O greatly wretched we!
Two worlds of woe.

Oedip. Art thou not gone then? ha!
How dar'st thou stand the fury of the gods?
Or com'st thou in the grave to reap new pleasures?

Joc. Talk on; till thou mak'st mad my rowling brain;
Groan still more death; and may those dismal sources
Still bubble on, and pour forth blood and tears.
Methinks, at such a meeting, heav'n stands still;
The sea nor ebbs, nor flows: this mole-hill earth
Is heav'd no more: the busie emmets cease;
Yet hear me on——

Oedip. Speak then, and blast my soul.

Joc. O, my lov'd lord, tho' I resolve a ruin
To match my crimes; by all my miseries,
'Tis horror, worse than thousand thousand deaths,
To send me hence without a kind farewell.

Oedip. Gods, how she shakes me! stay thee, O *Jocasta*,
Speak something e'er thou goest for ever from me.

Joc. 'Tis woman's weakness, that I would be pity'd;
Pardon me then, O greatest, tho' most wretched,
Of all thy kind: my soul is on the brink,
And sees the boiling furnace just beneath:
Do not thou push me off, and I will go,
With such a willingness, as if that heav'n
With all its glories glow'd for my reception.

Oedip. O, in my heart I feel the pangs of nature;
It works with kindness o'er: give, give me way;
I feel a melting here, a tenderness,

Too

Too mighty for the anger of the gods.
Direct me to thy knees : yet oh ! forbear,
Lest the dead embers should revive, stand off——
And at just distance let me groan my horrors——
Here on the earth, here blow my utmost gale ;
Here sob my sorrows, till I burst with sighing :
Here gasp and languish out my wounded soul.

Joc. In spite of all those crimes the cruel gods
Can charge me with, I know my innocence ;
Know yours : 'tis fate alone that makes us wretched,
For you are still my husband.

Oedip. Swear I am,
And I'll believe thee ; steal into thy arms,
Renew endearments, think 'em no pollutions,
But chaste as spirits joys : gently I'll come,
Thus weeping blind, like dewy night upon thee,
And fold thee softly in my arms to slumber.
[*The ghost of Lajus ascends by degrees, pointing at Jo-*
casta.

Joc. Be gone, my lord ! alas, what are we doing ?
Fly from my arms ! whirl-winds, seas, continents,
And worlds, divide us ! O thrice happy thou,
Who hast no use of eyes ; for here's a sight
Would turn the melting face of mercy's self
To a wild fury.

Oedip. Ha ! what seest thou there ?

Joc. The spirit of my husband ! O the gods !
How wan he looks !

Oedip. Thou rav'st ; thy husband's here.

Joc. There, there he mounts
In circling fire, amongst the blushing clouds !
And see he waves *Jocasta* from the world !

Ghost. *Jocasta, Oedipus.* [*Vanishes with thunder.*

Oedip. What wouldst thou have ?
Thou know'st I cannot come to thee, detain'd
In darkness here, and kept from means of death.
I've heard a spirit's force is wonderful ;
At whose approach, when starting from his dungeon,
The earth does shake, and the old ocean groans,
Rocks are remov'd, and tow'rs are thund'red down :
And walls of brass, and gates of adamant,

Are

Are passable as air, and fleet like winds.

Joc. Was that a raven's croak, or my son's voice?
No matter which; I'll to the grave, and hide me:
Earth open, or I'll tear thy bowels up.
Hark! he goes on, and blabs the deed of incest.

Oedip. Strike then, imperial ghost; dash all at once
This house of clay into a thousand pieces:
That my poor ling'ring soul may take her flight
To your immortal dwellings.

Joc. Haste thee then,
Or I shall be before thee: see, thou can'st not;
Then I will tell thee that my wings are on:
I'll mount, I'll fly, and with a port divine
Glide all along the gaudy milky soil,
To find my *Lajus* out; ask ev'ry god
In his bright palace, if he knows my *Lajus*,
My murder'd *Lajus*!

Oedip. Ha! how's this, *Jocasta*?
Nay, if thy brain be sick, then thou art happy.

Joc. Ha! will you not? shall I not find him out?
Will you not show him? are my tears despis'd?
Why, then I'll thunder, yes, I will be mad,
And fright you with my cries: Yes, cruel gods,
Tho' vultures, eagles, dragons tear my heart,
I'll snatch celestial flames, fire all your dwellings,
Melt down your golden roofs, and make your doors
Of crystal fly from off their diamond hinges;
Drive you all out from your ambrosial hives,
To swarm like bees about the field of heav'n:
This will I do, unless you shew me *Lajus*,
My dear, my murder'd lord; O *Lajus*! *Lajus*! *Lajus*!
[Exit *Jocasta*.]

Oedip. Excellent grief! why, this is as it shou'd be!
No mourning can be suitable to crimes
Like ours, but what death makes, or madness forms.
I cou'd have wish'd, methought, for sight again,
To mark the gallantry of her distraction:
Her blazing eyes darting like wand'ring stars, (gods,
T' have seen her mouthe the heav'ns, and mate the
While with her thund'ring voice she menac'd high,
And ev'ry accent twang'd with smarting sorrow;
But what's all this to thee? thou, coward, yet

Art living, canst not, wilt not find the road
To the great palace of magnificent death ;
Tho' thousand ways lead to his thousand doors,
Which day and night are still unbarr'd for all.

[*Clashing of swords : drums and trumpets without.*
Hark ! 'tis the noise of clashing swords ! the sound
Comes near : O, that a battle would come o'er me !
If I but grasp a sword, or wrest a dagger,
I'll make a ruin with the first that falls.

Enter Hæmon, with guards.

Hæm. Seize him, and bear him to the western tow'r.
Pardon me, sacred fir ; I am inform'd
That *Creon* has designs upon your life :
Forgive me then, if, to preserve you from him,
I order your confinement.

Oedip. Slaves, unhand me.
I think thou hast a sword : 'twas the wrong side.
Yet, cruel *Hæmon*, think not I will live ;
He that cou'd tear his eyes out, sure can find
Some desperate way to stifle his curst breath :
Or if I starve ! but that's a ling'ring fate ;
Or if I leave my brains upon the wall !
The airy soul can easily o'er-shoot
Those bounds with which thou striv'st to pale her in :
Yes, I will perish in despite of thee ;
And, by the rage that stirs me, if I meet thee
In th' other world, I'll curse thee for this usage. [*Exit.*

Hæm. *Tiresias*, after him ; and with your counsel
Advise him humbly ; charm, if possible,
These feuds within : while I without extinguish,
Or perish in th' attempt, the furious *Creon* ;
That brand which sets our city in a flame.

Tir. Heav'n prosper your intent, and give a period
To all our plagues : what old *Tiresias* can,
Shall straight be done. Lead, *Manto*, to the tow'r.

[*Ex. Tir. and Mant.*

Hæm. Follow me, all, and help to part this fray,
[*Trumpets again.*
Or fall together in the bloody broil. [*Exit.*

*Enter Creon with Eurydice, Pyracmon and his party
giving ground to Adrastus.*

Cre. Hold, hold your arms, *Adrastus* prince of *Arges*,
Hear,

Hear, and behold ; *Eurydice* is my prisoner.

Adr. What would'st thou, hell-hound ?

Cre. See this brandish'd dagger :

Forego th' advantage which thy arms have won,
Or, by the blood which trembles through the heart
Of her, whom more than life, I know, thou lov'st,
I'll bury to the hilt, in her fair breast,

This instrument of my revenge. (bloody hand.)

Adr. Stay thee, damn'd wretch ; hold, stop thy

Cre. Give order then, that on this instant, now,
This moment, all thy soldiers strait disband.

Adr. Away, my friends, since fate has so allotted ;
Be gone, and leave me to the villain's mercy.

Eur. Ah, my *Adrastus* ! call 'em, call 'em back !
Stand there ; come back ! O, cruel barbarous men !
Could you then leave your lord, your prince, your king,
After so bravely having fought his cause,
To perish by the hand of this base villain ?
Why rather rush you not at once together
All to his ruin ? drag him through the streets,
Hang his contagious quarters on the gates ;
Nor let my death affright you.

Cre. Die first thy self then.

Adr. O, I charge thee, hold.

Hence, from my presence all : he's not my friend
That disobeys ; see, art thou now appear'd ?

[*Ex. attendants.*

Or is there ought else yet remains to do,
That can atone thee ? slake thy thirst of blood
With mine : but save, O save that innocent wretch.

Cre. Forego thy sword, and yield thy self my prisoner.

Eur. Yet while there's any dawn of hope to save
Thy precious life, my dear *Adrastus*,
Whate'er thou dost, deliver not thy sword ;
With that thou may'st get off, tho' odds oppose thee :
For me, O, fear not ; no, he dares not touch me ;
His horrid love will spare me. Keep thy sword ;
Lest I be ravish'd after thou art slain.

Adr. Instruct me, gods ! What shall *Adrastus* do ?

Cre. Do what thou wilt, when she is dead ; my soldiers
With numbers will o'er-pow'r thee. Is't thy wish
Eurydice should fall before thee ?

Adr.

Adr. Traitor, no :
Better that thou and I, and all mankind
Should be no more.

Cre. Then cast thy sword away,
And yield thee to my mercy, or I strike.

Adr. Hold thy rais'd arm ; give me a moment's pause.
My father, when he blest me, gave me this ;
My son, said he, let this be thy last refuge ;
If thou forego'st it, misery attends thee :
Yet love now charms that from me, which in all
The hazards of my life I never lost.
'Tis thine, my faithful sword, my only trust ;
Tho' my heart tells me that the gift is fatal.

Cre. Fatal ! yes, foolish love-sick prince, it shall :
Thy arrogance, thy scorn, my wounds remembrance,
Turn all at once the fatal point upon thee.

Pyracmon, to the palace, straight ! dispatch
The king : hang *Hæmon* up, for he is loyal,
And will oppose me ; come, fir, are you ready ?

Adr. Yes, villain, for whatever thou canst dare.

Eur. Hold, *Creon*, or thro' me, thro' me you wound.

Adr. Off, madam, or we perish both ; behold
I'm not unarm'd, my ponyard's in my hand :
Therefore, away.

Eur. I'll guard your life with mine.

Cre. Dye both then ; there is now no time for dallying. [Kills Eurydice.]

Eur. Ah, prince, farewell ; farewell, my dear *Adrastus*. [Dies.]

Adr. Unheard-of monster ! eldest-born of hell !
Down, to thy primitive flames. [Stabs Creon.]

Cre. Help, soldiers, help :
Revenge me.

Adr. More ; yet more : a thousand wounds !
I'll stamp thee still, thus, to the gaping furies.

[Adrastus falls, kill'd by the soldiers.]

Enter Hæmon, guards, with Alcander and Pyracmon.
bound : the assassins are driven off.

O *Hæmon*, I am slain ; nor need I name
Th' inhuman author of all villanies ;
There he lyes gasping.

Crc. If I must plunge in flames,
Burn first my arm ; base instrument, unfit
To act the dictates of my daring mind :
Burn, burn for ever, O weak substitute
Of that, the god, ambition. [Dies.

Adr. She's gone ; O deadly marks-man, in the heart !
Yet in the pangs of death she grasps my hand :
Her lips too tremble, as if she would speak
Her last farewell. O, *Oedipus*, thy fall
Is great ; and nobly now thou goest attended !
'They talk of heroes, and celestial beauties,
And wondrous pleasures in the other world ;
Let me but find her there, I ask no more. [Dies.
Enter a Captain to Hæmon : with Tiresias and Manto.

Cap. O fir, the queen *Jocasta*, swift and wild,
As a robb'd tygres bounding o'er the woods,
Has acted murders that amaze mankind :
In twisted gold I saw her daughters hang
On the bed royal, and her little sons
Stabb'd through the breast upon the bloody pillows.

Hæm. Relentless heav'ns ! is then the fate of *Lajus*
Never to be aton'd ? how sacred ought
Kings lives be held, when but the death of one
Demands an empire's blood for expiation ?
But see ! the furious mad *Jocasta's* here.

*Scene draws and discovers Jocasta held by her women,
and stabb'd in many places of her bosom, her hair dis-
shevel'd, her children slain upon the bed.*

Was ever such a sight of so much horror,
And pity, brought to view !

Joc. Ah, cruel women !
Will you not let me take my last farewell
Of those dear babes ? O let me run and seal
My melting soul upon their bubbling wounds !
I'll print upon their coral mouths such kisses,
As shall recal their wand'ring spirits home.
Let me go, let me go, or I will tear you piece-meal.
Help, *Hæmon*, help :

Help, *Oedipus* ; help, gods, *Jocasta* dies.

Enter Oedipus above.

Oedip. I've found a window, and I thank the gods,
'Tis

'Tis quite unbarr'd : sure by the distant noise,
The height will fit my fatal purpose well.

Joc. What hoa, my *Oedipus* ! see, where he stands !
His groping ghost is lodg'd upon a tow'r,
Nor can it find the road : mount, mount, my soul ;
I'll wrap thy shivering spirit in lambent flames !
And so we'll fail.

But see ! we're landed on the happy coast ;
And all the golden strands are cover'd o'er
With glorious gods, that come to try our cause.

Jove, Jove, whose majesty now sinks me down,
He who himself burns in unlawful fires,
Shall judge, and shall acquit us. O, 'tis done ;

'Tis fixt by fate, upon record divine :

And *Oedipus* shall now be ever mine.

[*Dies.*

Oedip. Speak, *Hæmon* ; what has fate been doing
What dreadful deed has mad *Jocasta* done ? (there ?

Hæm. The queen her self, and all your wretched
Are by her fury slain.

(offspring,

Oedip. By all my woes,

She has out-done me, in revenge and murder ;

And I should envy her the sad applause :

But, oh ! my children ! oh, what have they done ?

This was not like the mercy of the heav'ns,

To set her madness on such cruelty :

This stirs me more than all my sufferings,

And with my last breath I must call you tyrants.

Hæm. What mean you, sir.

Oedip. *Jocasta* ! lo, I come.

O *Lajus*, *Labdacus*, and all you spirits

Of the *Cadmean* race, prepare to meet me,

All weeping rang'd along the gloomy shore :

Extend your arms t' embrace me ; for I come,

May all the gods too from their battlements

Behold, and wonder at a mortal's daring ;

And when I knock the goal of dreadful death,

Shout and applaud me with a clap of thunder :

Once more, thus wing'd by horrid fate, I come

Swift as a falling meteor ; lo, I fly,

And thus go downwards, to the darker sky.

[*Thunder,*

[*Thunder, he flings himself from the window : the Thebans gather about his body.*

Ham. O prophet, *Oedipus* is now no more!
O curs'd effect of the most deep despair!

Tir. Cease your complaints, and bear his body hence;
The dreadful sight will daunt the drooping *Thebans*,
Whom heav'n decrees to raise with peace and glory.
Yet, by these terrible examples warn'd,
The sacred fury that alarms the world,
Let none, tho' ne'er so virtuous, great and high,
Be judg'd entirely blest before they dye.

[*Exeunt:*



F I N I S.

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